

"KOKORO"

BY
SOSEKI NATSUME

Translated by
INEKO SATO

GIFT



Published by
THE HOKUSEIDO PRESS
for the Japan Writers' Society

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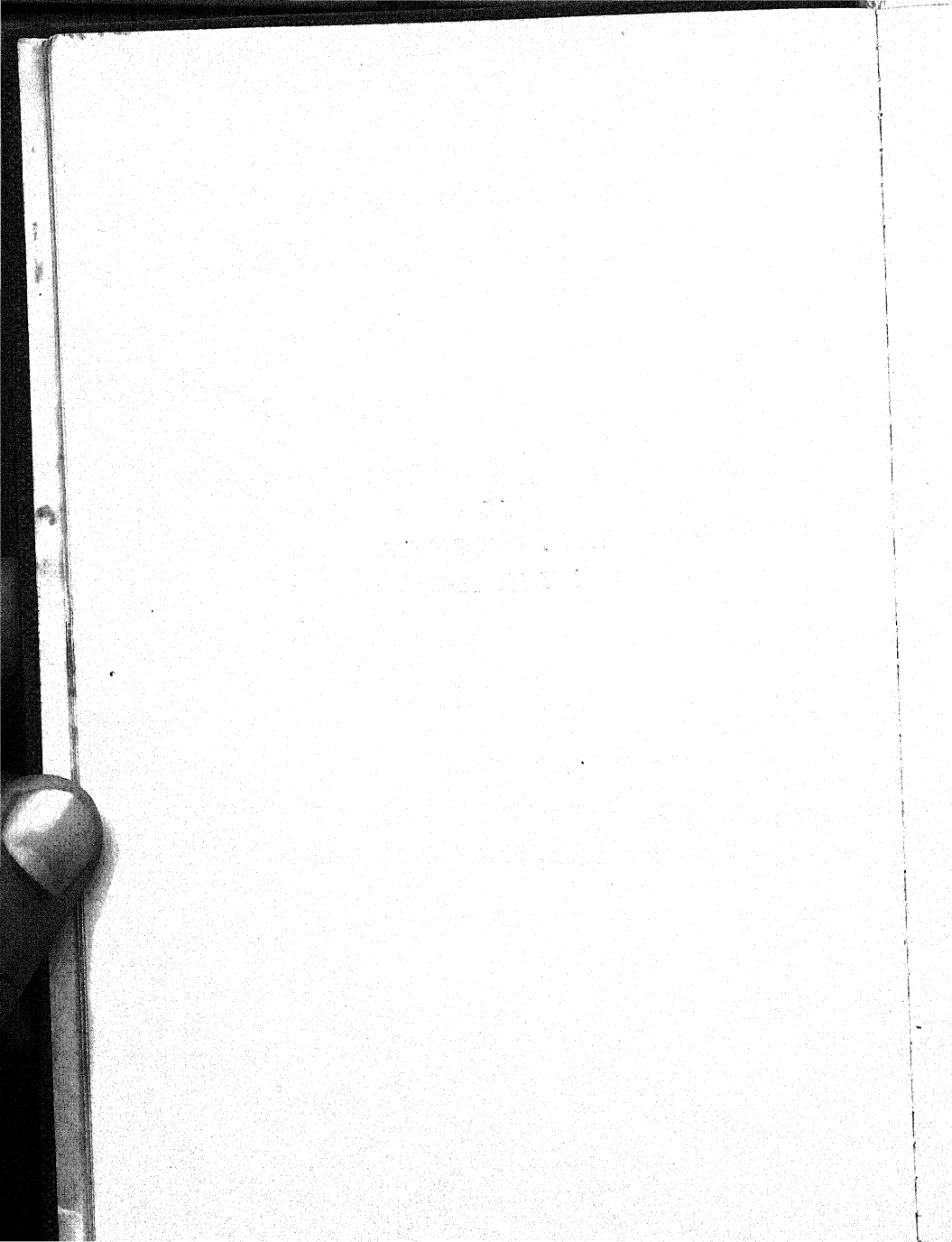
PRINTED IN JAPAN

TO
THE MEMORY OF
MY MOTHER

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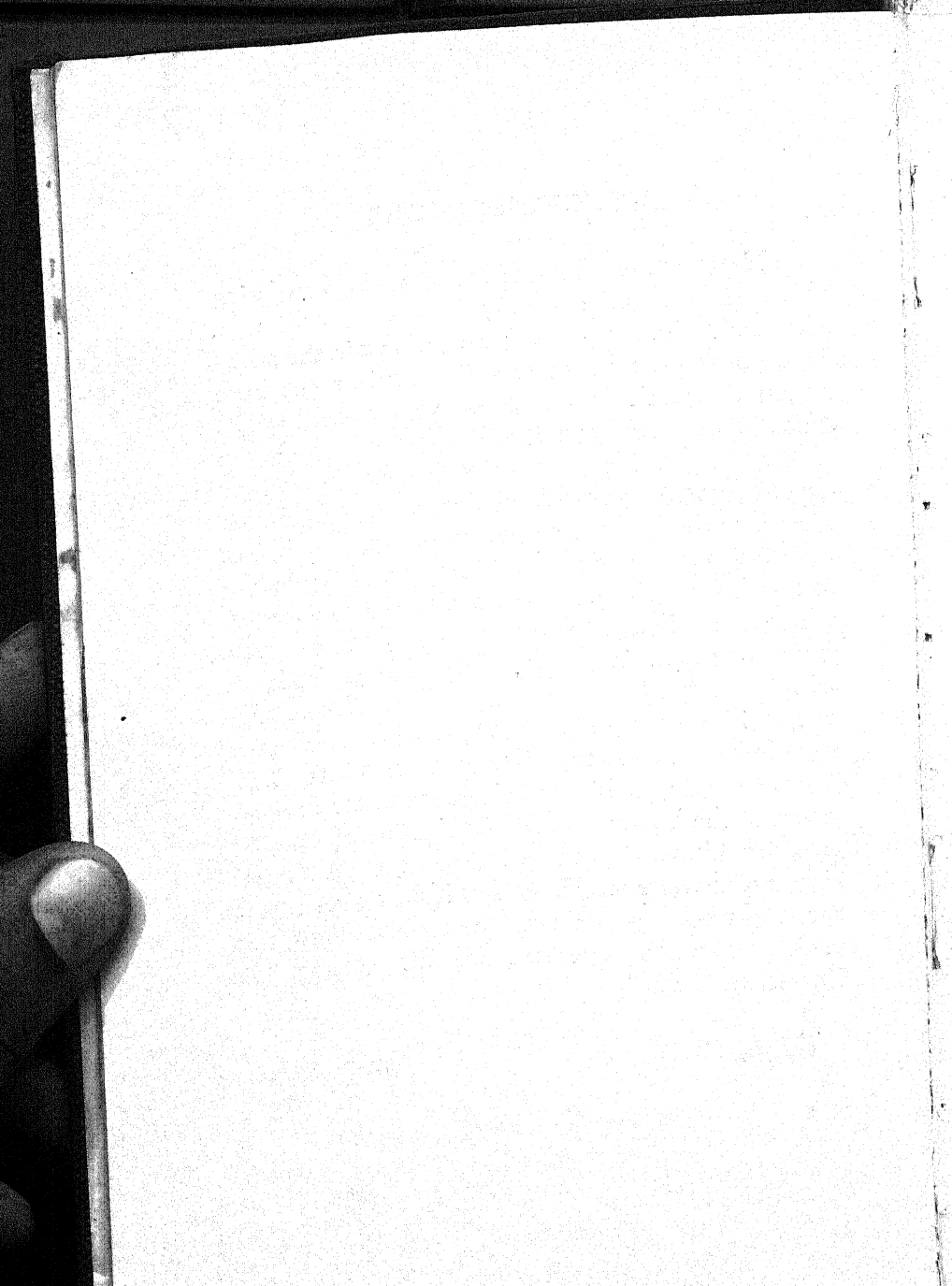


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many friends have helped me in translating this book. I am especially indebted to Miss G. Caulfield, without whose keen interest in the translation of modern Japanese fiction I might not have begun the work at all. I am very grateful to Dr. M. C. Bradbrook and Dr. P. Hodgson of Girton College, Cambridge, who also helped me with my English, and to Miss Lloyd Thomas and Dr. D. M. Hoare, without whose encouragement I could not have finished the work. Besides these I would like to thank Prof. Doi of Tôhoku Imperial University, whose valuable advice has unsparingly been given from the beginning, H. E. Mr. Hikotarô Ichikawa of the Foreign Office, and the Japan Writers' Society, without whose support this book could never have been brought to publication; also Mrs. C. K. Sansbury who so kindly helped me in the final revision of the book; and Prof. Komiya of Tôhoku Imperial University to whose works on Sôseki Natsumé my note on Sôseki and *Kokoro* owes a great deal and who, together with the Iwanami Press, has made it possible to reprint Sôseki's painting, "A Chrysanthemum."

Tokyo, 1941.

Ineko Satô.



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PART I
THE SENSEI¹ AND I

1

I never called him anything else, so I will write about him here only as the *sensei* without mentioning his name, not because of any hesitation in doing so, but simply because the *sensei* comes naturally to my mind when I think of him. As for his initial I could never bring myself to resort to such an unfeeling manner of designating him.

It was in Kamakura that we first met. I was a young student then. A friend who was staying there during the vacation asked me to come and spend a few days with him, and after waiting two or three days to raise the extra money, I went. But scarcely three days after I arrived, my friend received a telegram from home, ordering him to return at once. The telegram stated that his mother was seriously ill, but my friend hardly believed it. He had already been urged to marry by his parents, and this according to his modern ways of thinking, was distasteful because of his extreme youth. Besides, he did not like the girl herself. So he had been idling near Tokyo, though he ought to have been at home

¹ A Japanese word for teacher. But even the professors of a university are called *sensei* by the students.

during the vacation. He showed me the telegram asking me what he should do. How should I know? But if his mother was really ill, there was nothing to do but return to the country. So he finally decided to go, and I was left alone.

There was some time before school opened, and since I could remain in Kamakura or return to Tokyo at will, I decided to stay on in the lodgings we occupied. For my friend, though his father was a man of considerable property in Chugoku, differed little from me in his way of living during his student days. So even after his return home I was able to keep my room and avoid the trouble of finding another.

The lodging was in an out-of-the-way corner in Kamakura. We could not reach such fashionable enjoyments as billiards or ice-cream without traversing a long lane between the rice-fields, and it cost twenty *sen* to go by rickshaw. But there were many private villas in the neighbourhood, and being near the seashore, I found it very pleasant and convenient for swimming. Every day I went to the seashore to bathe, going down to the beach between the soot-covered, straw-thatched houses. There were so many people on the sand that one wondered where all the town people stayed. Sometimes the sea was thronged with black heads like a public bath. I knew no one, but the gaiety of the place wrapped me up comfortably, and I was delighted as I stretched myself on the sand, and jumped about, my knees beaten by the surf.

It was amidst this lively scene that I found the *sensei*. There were two bathing-booths on the shore, but I picked out one of them haphazard and made it my head-quarters. Unlike those who had grand villas about Hasé, the summer visitors in this part were obliged to use these public-booths. In them they deposited their hats and parasols, washed their salty bodies, hung their bathing-dresses to dry, drank tea, rested and chatted. Though I had no bathing-dress, I left my things in the booth, where they would be safe while I enjoyed myself bathing.

2

When I saw the *sensei* in the booth, he was just about to take his things off, in preparation for a bathe. I, on the contrary, was walking from the shore, enjoying the fresh breeze as it dried my wet body. There were a crowd of black heads between us. Without some lucky chance I should have missed my *sensei*. In spite of the bustling crowd on the shore, and of my relaxed inattentiveness, my notice was drawn to my *sensei* at once, because he was with a foreigner. The moment the exceedingly white skin of that foreigner made its appearance in the booth, my attention was fixed upon him. He wore a real Japanese *yukata*,¹ which he took off and threw upon a bench in a bathhouse. He then crossed his arms

¹ A kind of kimono worn by men and women in summer.

and stood facing the sea. He had nothing on except the short drawers which we wore, and this in itself struck me as strange. Two days before I had gone to Yuigahama, where I lolled for a long time on the sand, watching foreigners swim. My seat on a little mound commanded a view of the entrance to the hotel, where men were preparing for their dip, but none of them, either coming or going, exposed waist or arms or legs. The women, in particular, were careful to hide their bodies, and most of them wore rubber caps, which could be seen bobbing up and down in the water like so many red, green, or blue leaves. Fresh from this introduction to foreign methods of bathing, I was surprised at this man's indifference to exposing his body.

Presently he turned to the Japanese beside him who was stooping to pick up a towel which had fallen on the sand, and said a word or two. The Japanese wrapped his head in the towel as soon as he caught it, and began to walk towards the sea. That man was the *sensei*.

I watched those two walking down the shore together from mere curiosity. They stepped into the waves at once, and passing through the multitude who were screaming near the shore, went further out to a considerably less crowded part, and began to swim. Their heads moved rapidly toward the open sea till they looked very small. Then they made straight for the shore, and as they returned to the booth, without the usual cold well water bath,

wiped their bodies dry, put on their clothes, and quickly went away, no one knew where.

At that time I had nothing to worry me, but I was rather lonely and wanted some adventure. So the next day at the same time, I went to the booth again. This time the *sensei* came alone, wearing a straw hat. He took his spectacles off and put them on the bench, and at once wrapping his head in the towel, went quickly down to the sea. As he passed through the noisy bathers, and began to swim all alone, suddenly I was possessed by the desire to follow him. I splashed into the shallow water until it covered my head, as I tried to reach a deeper part, and soon was swimming in pursuit of the *sensei*. But contrary to the course yesterday, he struck out for the shore, making a clear sweep, and my plan was spoiled. He was already dressed and was leaving the booth, as I reached it waving my dripping hands.

3

The next day I went to the seashore at the same hour, and saw him. It was the same the day after. But there was no opportunity for speech or salutation between us. Besides, the *sensei's* attitude was unsociable. Always he came at the same hour, quite alone, and went away, never taking any notice of the others. He seemed to pay almost no attention at all to his surroundings, however gay they

might be. The tall body of the foreigner who had come with him on the first day was never seen there again. The *sensei* always came alone.

Once he ran nimbly up the shore from the surf as usual, and was going to put on his *yukata* which he had thrown on the accustomed bench, when he discovered that it had somehow become covered with grains of sand. The *sensei* turned round and shook it, then the spectacles which he had placed under it slipped down through a crevice in the bench. It was not until he fastened *hekoobi*¹ around his *shirogasuri*² *yukata* that he discovered his loss, and suddenly began to search for them everywhere. But his search did not last long, for I thrust my head and hand under the bench, and picked them up. The *sensei* took them from my hand, with a "Thank you."

The day after, I followed the *sensei* and jumped into the sea, and swam with him in the same direction. As we were about two hundred and fifty yards from the shore, the *sensei* turned back and spoke to me. There was nobody there floating on the wide, blue sea except us two. And the strong rays of the sun were beating down upon the water and the hills as far as eye could reach. I stretched my muscles with a sense of liberty and joy, and jumped and danced furiously in the water. Then

¹ A kind of sash.

² A kind of cotton cloth.

the *sensei* stopped exercising his arms and legs and lay on his back on the waves. I followed his example, looking up into the deep blue sky which dazzled my eyes. "This is delightful, isn't it?" I cried aloud.

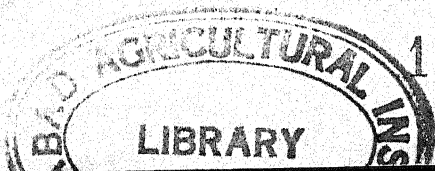
Presently the *sensei*, who changed his posture as one about to stand in the water, said, "Let us go home." Being full of life, I wanted to have a longer swim. But when the *sensei* invited me to go back, I readily complied. And we two took the same route back toward the shore.

After that we became friends, but I did not yet know where he was staying.

I think it happened on the afternoon of the third day after this. When I met the *sensei* at the booth, he asked me suddenly, "Are you going to stay here for a long time?" Lacking forethought, I was not ready to answer such a question. So all I could say was, "I don't know." But as I looked at the *sensei*'s smiling face, I felt suddenly ashamed, and could not help asking, "And you, *sensei*?" This was the first time that the word *sensei* had passed my lips.

I called at his lodgings that night. It was not an inn, but one of those villa-like buildings in the vast yard of a temple. I understood that the people who lived there were not those of his family. As I called him *sensei* again and again, he smiled bitterly. I apologized saying that it was my custom to address my seniors in this way. I asked him about that

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foreigner. The *sensei* described to me his eccentric ways, and told me he was not in Kamakura then, and many other things about him. He added that he felt it strange that he, who had very few acquaintances even among the Japanese, should become friendly with this foreigner. Finally I said that I felt as if I had seen him before but could not remember where. Young as I was, I wondered then if the *sensei* had felt the same regarding me. So I was disappointed when he made no response. The *sensei*, however, sank into deep thought for a while, and answered, "No, I don't feel I have ever seen you before. Are you not mistaken?"

4

At the end of the month I returned to Tokyo. But the *sensei* left long before. When I parted from him, I asked him if I might come to see him sometimes. The *sensei* only replied simply, "Yes, come." By this time I felt that I had become intimate with him, and I expected a warmer invitation, so this unsatisfactory answer slightly wounded my self-confidence.

He often disappointed me by assuming this indifferent attitude. Sometimes he seemed to realize it, but at others he was totally unconscious. I experienced this little disappointment over and over again, but it could never make me want to give him up. Instead, whenever I had any doubt about his

attitude, I was always the more eager to make every advance. I felt all the time that if I waited long enough and tried hard enough, something I expected would appear to reward me. Though young, I did not presume that my youthful enthusiasm could so easily work on other human beings. It was beyond my power to understand why I entertained such feelings for the *sensei* alone, and it was not until he died that all became clear to me. From the beginning he never disliked me. His blunt salutations and his attitude which often appeared cold were not prompted by any desire on his part to discourage my friendship. The poor *sensei* warned every one who tried to approach him that he was unworthy of friendship, and that they had better not approach him. The *sensei*, who did not respond to the warm-hearted advances of others, seemed to despise himself before he repulsed those who would be his friends.

Of course when I returned to Tokyo, I had every intention of calling on the *sensei*. I had two weeks before school opened, and I thought that I should see him during that time. But two or three days in the city dimmed the glamour of Kamakura. The atmosphere of the great city, together with the pull and recall which went with the revival of memories, made a strong impression upon my heart. Every student I saw in the street filled my mind with anticipation of the prospects of the new term. I forgot the *sensei* for the moment.

But after a month from the time school opened,

I began to relax and the memory of the *sensei* revived in my mind. My walks in the streets lacked their former satisfaction, and I looked around my room, feeling that something was missing. The *sensei*'s face recurred constantly to my mind, and I wanted to see him again.

The first time that I called at his house, he was not at home. The second time, I remember, was the next Sunday. It was a beautiful day, and the sky was so clear that it seemed to penetrate into my body. He was out that day too. While we were in Kamakura, I heard from the *sensei*'s own mouth that he usually stayed at home, or rather, he did not like to go out. Being unable to meet him twice in succession, I was reminded of those words of his, and felt some disappointment somewhere in my heart. So I did not turn away at once, but stood looking at the maid's face, hesitating. The maid, recognizing me as the visitor of the previous day, left me there and disappeared within the house. Then a beautiful lady who seemed to be his wife came out. She told me politely that the *sensei* was accustomed to visit a certain grave in Zoshigaya on that day every month. She said he had gone out about ten minutes before. She expressed deep regret. Then I bowed and went out. I walked for about a hundred yards toward the lively town, then I was seized with the impulse to go to Zoshigaya for a walk. This inclination was not unmixed with the hope that I might meet the *sensei*. So I turned round at once.

5

I entered the cemetery from the left-hand side of the field of young plants in front of it, and proceeded along the wide walk bordered with maple-trees, when suddenly from the farthest extremity a man who looked like the *sensei* came out of a resting-booth. I approached till I could see the rims of his spectacles shining in the sun, and all of a sudden called to him in a loud voice, "*Sensei!*" He suddenly stopped short, and looked at my face.

"Why, why—?" Twice the *sensei* uttered the same word, which was repeated in a tone that sounded strange in the hushed afternoon, till I became unable to make any reply.

"Did you follow me? Why did you do it?"

The *sensei*'s attitude was unexpectedly calm; his voice was rather melancholy. But in his expression there was a kind of cloud which I could not make out.

I told the *sensei* why I had come.

"Did my wife tell you to whose grave I had come? Did she mention the name?"

"No, of course not."

"O she didn't? She ought not to have told you anything. Why, this is the first time she ever met you, and there was no need for her to tell you."

The *sensei* seemed to be satisfied at last. But to me his meaning was incomprehensible.

The *sensei* and I, trying to get to the street, passed

among the graves. Beside the tomb-stones which bore the words a certain so-and-so Isabella's resting-place, or the god's servant Rogin's long home, a stupa stood, on which was written, "All living things possess the quality of Buddha," and I noticed the grave of an ambassador plenipotentiary So-and-so. In front of a little tomb-stone on which was engraved three Chinese characters, I asked the *sensei* how it should be read. "Perhaps they mean Andrews," he said, and smiled a bitter smile.

Unlike me, the *sensei* did not seem to see humour or irony in the way those who had been left behind expressed their grief on those stones. At first, without a word, he listened to my casual remarks, as I pointed to a round grave-stone or a long granite monument, but at last he said, "I see that you have never given any thought to the meaning of death," and I was silenced. The *sensei*, too, said nothing more.

On the border of the walk stood a huge gingko-tree, so tall that it seemed to be hiding the sky. As we stood under this tree, the *sensei* looked up at the high branches and observed, "It becomes very pretty in a few weeks. The leaves turn entirely yellow, and the ground hereabout will be covered with the golden fallen leaves." The *sensei* always walked under this tree once a month.

The man, who was digging the uneven ground to make a new resting-place, stopped his work, and stood looking at us. We turned to the left and

soon came to the street.

I, having nothing to do, and nowhere to go, walked in the direction that the *sensei* took. He talked less than usual. But I, unaffected by his silence, strolled along beside him.

"Are you going straight home, *sensei*?" I asked.

"Yes, since I have no other place to go."

We two, again silent, went down the slope southwards.

"Is that your family plot?" I began to talk again.

"No."

"Whose grave is it that you visit?—Is it a relation of yours?"

"No."

The *sensei* was again silent. The subject was dropped there. Then after we had walked about a hundred yards, the *sensei* suddenly reverted to it.

"It is my friend's grave."

"Do you visit your friend's grave every month?"

"Yes."

On that day the *sensei* told me nothing except this.

6

After that I visited him often. Whenever I went, the *sensei* was at home. The oftener I visited him, the more I wanted to see him.

The *sensei*'s attitude toward me, however, when we became intimate, did not differ much from his

manner when we first met. He was always calm, sometimes so quiet that I actually felt lonely when I was with him. From the first, I was conscious of something unapproachable and strange in this man. And yet within me was an irresistible desire to be near him. Perhaps I was alone in this curious attraction, but the intuition which prompted it could be trusted in spite of my youth and inexperience, and it was subsequently proved that both the instinct and attraction had been based on solid ground. A man who could love human beings, who could not help loving them, yet was unable to receive with wide open arms those who wanted to come into his heart—this was the *sensei*.

He was always calm, and often serene. But sometimes a strange cloud passed over his face, though it disappeared almost before I perceived it like the black shadow of a bird cast upon the window-pane. The first time that I noticed that cloud on his brow was when I called to him suddenly in the Zoshigaya grave-yard. In that strange moment, I felt that the pulse which had been pleasant and quick died away. But it was only for a moment. My heart recovered its usual elasticity in about five minutes, and after that that shadow never affected me till one evening at the end of the Indian Summer when it again oppressed me.

As I talked with the *sensei*, there came to my mind the image of the huge ginkgo-tree to which he had specially attracted my attention. Calculating, I

found that the day on which the *sensei* used to go to the grave was the third from that night, the day of the week on which I was the least occupied, my lessons being finished at noon. So I spoke to the *sensei*.

"Do you think the leaves have fallen from the gingko-tree in Zoshigaya yet?"

"Perhaps it is not entirely bare yet."

So saying, the *sensei* fixed his eyes on my face, and kept them there for a while. I added at once.

"May I go with you when you visit the grave? I do want to take a walk with you there."

"I go to pay a visit to the grave, never to stroll."

"But if you take the air when you visit the grave, it comes to the same thing, doesn't it?"

The *sensei* did not reply. Then after a while he said, "I only visit the grave." He stuck to his point, in his mind visiting the grave was different from a walk. Whether this was only an excuse for not wanting to go with me, I could not guess, but the *sensei* at that moment looked very childish and queer. I was inclined to keep to my point.

"Then it makes no difference to me if it is not a stroll, but please take me with you. I will visit the grave."

In my mind there was no difference between the grave-visiting and the walk. Then the *sensei*'s brow clouded, and in his eyes, a strange light shone. It seemed a slight uneasiness, which could not be expressed by the words bewilderment, hatred, or fear. All of a sudden the strong memory of Zoshi-

gaya as I called to the *sensei* came to me. The two impressions were quite the same. "No," said the *sensei*, "I don't want to go to that grave with any one, for a reason that I cannot tell. I have never taken even my wife with me."

7

I wondered. But I never went to see the *sensei* with the idea of probing him, so I left the matter alone. This attitude of mine in those days, I think, was one of the most precious things in my life. I think it was that alone which kept our friendship warm. If my friendship for him had been at all tinged with curiosity, the string of sympathy which bound us would have broken at once and for ever. In my youthfulness I was never conscious of my own attitude, which was perhaps the reason why it was valuable. But what if I had acted in any other way? It makes me shiver only to imagine what might have happened. The *sensei* was always in dread of cold eyes intent only upon studying him.

I formed the habit of calling at his house two or three times a month. One day after I had begun to call regularly, the *sensei* asked me suddenly, "Why do you come to see such a man as I?" "O I have no particular reason.—But am I disturbing you?" "No, I don't say that," observed the *sensei*, and in fact I could not find any hint expressed in his manner that I was a nuisance. I knew that he did not have

much company, and that there were only two or three among his class-mates living in Tokyo. Once in a while I fell in with some students of his own province, but none of them seemed as friendly with him as I was.

"I am such a lonely fellow," he said, "that I enjoy your company, so I asked you why you come to see me so often."

"But why do you ask me such a question?" I asked again, but the *sensei* was silent. He only looked at my face and asked me how old I was.

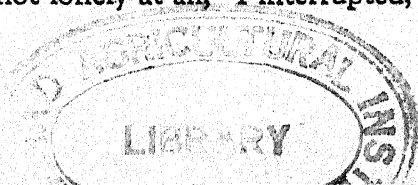
To me this conversation was exceedingly irrelevant, but I left his house without attempting to make anything clear.

Within four days I called on him again. As soon as the *sensei* appeared in the drawing-room, he began to laugh, and said, "Here you are again." "Yes, here I am," and I began to laugh too.

If anyone else had said that, I should surely have been offended. But it was entirely different with the *sensei*. It not only did not offend me, but actually pleased me.

"I am a lonely fellow," he repeated those words that night. "I am lonely, but you are a lonely child too, I suppose? As I am old, I can remain quiet, though I feel lonely, but you cannot, your youth prevents it. You want to be doing and to advance as much as you can. Don't you? You want to come upon something as you advance."

"I am not lonely at all," I interrupted, but he



did not seem to hear.

"It is in our youth that our sense of loneliness is most keen. If not, why do you come to see me?" Once more he repeated his words of the time before. "You are lonely somewhere in your heart even when you are with me. Because I have not power enough to pluck out your loneliness from you. You will be forced to stretch your hands in another direction. You will not think of coming to see me then," he added, and laughed a lonely laugh.

8

Fortunately the *sensei's* prophecy was not realized. Inexperienced as I was, I could not understand even the obvious meaning of this prophecy. I continued to go to see him, and finally I was sometimes invited to take supper with him, which gave me more opportunities of conversing with his wife.

As a normal human being, I was not indifferent to women. But I had had no friends among them, my youth and circumstances had not encouraged intimacy with women. Perhaps it may have been for this reason that I was often attracted by strangers I passed on the street. The *sensei's* wife, when I first saw her at the entrance of his house, impressed me as beautiful. And this impression was strengthened by subsequent meetings. But up to this time her personality had made little impression upon me. This was undoubtedly due to her having no oppor-

tunity of showing her peculiar gifts, rather than to her not possessing them. But I always regarded her as something belonging to the *sensei*, as it were, a part of him. She, on her part, looked upon me kindly because I happened to be the student who often came to see her husband. So I remember nothing about her during those early days of our acquaintance except her beauty.

Once I was given *saké*¹ at his house, waited upon by his wife. The *sensei* seemed to be gayer than usual. He offered his wife the cup which he had just drained, saying, "Do take a cup or two, dear." She was about to decline, but took the cup reluctantly. Drawing her well-shaped eye-brows together, she held to her lips the cup which I had half filled with *saké*. Then they began to talk.

"How unusual! You hardly ever ask me to take *saké*, do you?"

"Because I know you don't like it. But it is good for you sometimes. It cheers you up."

"Indeed, it doesn't. On the contrary, it makes me most uncomfortable. But you always look happy when you take a little."

"Sometimes I feel extremely gay. But not always."

"How do you feel to-night?"

"This is one of the gay nights."

"Suppose you try it every night just a little?"

¹ A kind of wine made from rice.

"No, thank you."

"But you had better. It cheers us both up, and I like to see you happy."

The *sensei* and his wife lived alone with their maid. And whenever I called, the house was very quiet. I never remember hearing a spontaneous, joyous laugh. Sometimes I felt that the *sensei* and I were the only human beings in that silent house.

"It might have been better if we had had children," she observed once, turning toward me. "Yes, I suppose so," I replied. But I felt no particular sympathy. Not yet having had a wife or children, I regarded the latter only as a nuisance.

"Shall I find one to adopt for you?" the *sensei* said.

"An *adopted* child! That's different, I am afraid. Don't you think so?" She looked at me, as if wishing me to confirm her opinion.

"But we can never have children of our own, no, never," he said.

His wife was silent. But I asked him to explain what he meant.

"It's our nemesis," he said, laughing aloud.

9

As far as I had ever been able to know, the *sensei* and his wife were a happy couple. But as I had never lived with them as a member of their family, I could not know the intimacies of their

married life, but when he was talking with me in his drawing-room, he often called his wife instead of the maid when he wanted something, turning back towards the sliding-door, and calling her name, "Shizu," in a tone which always sounded tender. Besides, the manner of his wife's answer to his call was extremely gentle. When I was invited to dinner, and his wife sat at the table, the harmony of this couple seemed to manifest itself more clearly than ever.

The *sensei* often took his wife to concerts and theatres, and I remember their taking short trips together on several occasions. I still have the picture postcard which he sent to me from Hakone. When he went to Nikko, I got a letter from him which contained a maple leaf.

This in brief is the account of the relation between the *sensei* and his wife as I saw it in those days. There was, however, only one exception. One day when I was just about to announce myself at his entrance as usual, I heard someone talking in the direction of the drawing-room. Listening closely, I found that the tone was not ordinary, but suggested a quarrel. As the drawing-room in his house was next to the entrance-hall, my ears could catch the voices clearly enough to detect their sharpness, though I stood outside of the entrance-door. I knew one of them was the *sensei*'s, which now and then grew louder than usual. I was not so sure about the other voice, because of its low tone, but I sup-

posed it was his wife's, and it seemed to be sobbing. I did not know what to do for a moment, but making up my mind, returned to my lodgings at once.

A strangely uneasy mood attacked me, and I could not take in what I was reading. In about an hour the *sensei* appeared under my window and called my name. In surprise, I opened the window. "Let us stroll about a little," he said. I took out my watch which I had bound to my *obi*¹ when I went to his house, and looked at it. It was past eight. I still wore my *hakama*,² so I went out at once.

That night I drank beer with the *sensei*. He was not able to drink much, and when he did not cheer up with the quantity that he usually took, he would never venture to take more and risk becoming tipsy.

"It is of no use to-night," he said, smiling bitterly.

"Ah, doesn't it make you happy?" I asked, quite sorry for him.

While I sat with him, the happenings of an hour before never left my mind. It tortured me like a fish-bone stuck in my throat. In one minute I almost determined to confess all, but the next minute I decided not to, and I was strangely restless, till the *sensei* perceived it, and he began.

"You are not yourself to-night, and to tell you

¹ A kind of sash.

² A kind of kilt worn by students.

the truth, I am not either. Have you noticed anything?"

I could not answer.

"In fact, I quarrelled with my wife a little while ago, which has excited my foolish nerves," he advanced.

"Why . . . ?" I could not repeat the word quarrel.

"Because she misunderstands me. Even though I explain to her repeatedly, she can never understand. So I lost my temper."

"How does she misunderstand you?" I asked. But he did not attempt to answer me, and went on.

"If I were the kind of man that she thinks me, I should never suffer like this."

Again, it was impossible for me to imagine how much he was suffering.

10

Neither he nor I uttered a word for about seven hundred yards, as we walked along towards home. But after that long silence, the *sensei* suddenly observed, "I was wrong. I was angry when I left home. She must be worried. Women's lot, I think, is harder than men's. And my wife has no one to rely on, except me, no one at all."

He paused, and was silent for a while. But he did not seem to wait for my answer, and went on. "It hardly seems right for me to speak like this. It

might give you the impression that I am strong-minded. How do I appear to you? Am I strong or weak?"

"O about midway between the two, I should think," I answered. This answer appeared to have been a little unexpected. He closed up again, and walked along without a word.

My lodging lay on the way to his home. However, when we reached the nearest point to my lodging, I felt I could not leave him there, and asked him if I might accompany him home. But he stopped me, waving his hand.

"It's too late. Go back to your room as soon as you can. I, too, must hurry, my wife is waiting."

"My wife is waiting" strangely warmed my heart, and because of that I soon fell asleep, reassured, and I remembered it for a long time. It clearly showed me that the breach between the *sen-sei* and his wife was not a serious one. And my subsequent visit to his home almost convinced me that on the whole these misunderstandings were not frequent. In fact, he once said, "I have known only one woman in my life. No woman except my wife has ever appealed to me. As for my wife, she too regards me as the only man in all the world. So we ought to be the happiest couple on earth."

I have forgotten upon what occasion he made this observation, so I cannot explain why he made such a confession to me. But I can recall even now how sincere his manner was and how melancholy

was his tone. But the last words "We ought to be the happiest couple on earth" sounded strange to me. Why did he not say "We are the happiest couple"? Why did he substitute "We ought to be"? That was what puzzled me. Besides, he laid especial stress on those last words. Was he really happy? Or did he feel that he ought to be happier than he really was? The question troubled me. But it was not my nature to entertain doubts for a very long time, and this one soon disappeared.

Not long after this, I happened to call at his house when he was out and had a talk with his wife. The *sensei* had gone out to Shinbashi to see a friend off who was going abroad by the steamer which was to leave Yokohama that day. In those days people who were to take the ship left Shinbashi at 8.30 in the morning. I wanted the *sensei*'s opinion on a certain book, and called at his house at nine, as he had arranged for me. But he had suddenly been obliged to go to Shinbashi out of courtesy to his friend who had taken the trouble to come to say good-bye on the day before. He had left word for me to wait. So I had a talk with his wife while I waited in his drawing-room.

11

I was already a university student, and I felt myself grown up since my first visit to the *sensei*. I had also come to know the *sensei*'s wife rather

well, so I felt no awkwardness or restraint when I talked with her. At first we spoke of many things which I have forgotten. Only one portion of our conversation stands out clearly in my mind. But before we come to that, I must say a word in preparation.

The *sensei* was a graduate of the Imperial University, which fact I had known from the beginning. But it was not until a few weeks after I returned from Kamakura that I found out that he had no fixed profession. I wondered at the time how he had managed to live without anything to do.

His name and existence were almost unknown in the world. I, who had come into close contact with him, seemed to be the only one who had either knowledge of or respect for his learning or his ideas. I often expressed my regret on this subject to the *sensei*. But he, on his part, never took what I said seriously, and only said, "If a man like me goes into the world and speaks out his opinions, it is unpardonable."

To me that answer was too modest, until I realized that it showed his cold critical attitude toward the world. As a matter of fact, the *sensei* sometimes attacked those among his class-mates who had become famous with merciless severity. I frankly mentioned to him this contradiction in his conduct, for I was really sorry for the world which was so indifferent to his gifts. The *sensei* observed then in a low tone, "It can't be helped, as I am a man

deprived of the power to act upon the world." In his face a deep and serious expression appeared. Whether it showed disappointment, or regret, or sadness, I did not know, but it was so strong and impressive that I could not utter a word.

As I talked with his wife, the subject of our conversation shifted from the *sensei* to this problem, and settled there.

"Why does the *sensei* never work in the world, only studying and thinking at home like that?"

"He is hopeless, he doesn't like that sort of thing."

"Is it because he has come to believe that it is foolish to seek for outward success in life?"

"Has come to believe—as I am a woman, I am afraid I cannot understand rightly, but I think that is not the reason. He wants to do something after all, doesn't he? But he cannot, which really is tragic."

"But he is perfectly well, isn't he?"

"Yes, of course. He has nothing wrong with him at all."

"Then why can't he take any active part in the world?"

"I don't know. If I could understand that, I should never worry like this. But since I cannot understand what he is thinking, I am anxious about him all the time."

There was deep sympathy in her tone. But the smile did not disappear from her lips. As far as

looks went, I was graver than she. Looking rather grim, I remained silent. Then as if remembering something, she suddenly began.

"When he was young, he was not like this. He was quite different. But he has changed entirely."

"When do you mean?"

"In his student days."

"Did you know him when he was a student?"

And suddenly she blushed.

12

I heard from both the *sensei* and his wife that she was a native of Tokyo. I had heard her say in a joking manner that to speak exactly she was half *Edokko*.¹ For her father had come from Tottori, as I remember, while her mother was born in Ichigaya when Tokyo was still called Edo. But the *sensei*'s home was Niigata, a province far away from either Tottori or Tokyo. So if his wife had known him as a student, apparently it was not because they had come from the same native place. His wife, blushing, however, seemed to be unwilling to speak further, so I did not pursue the subject.

From the time I learned to know him until his death, I was deeply acquainted with his thoughts and feelings as I talked with him about many things, but I never heard him speak about his courtship and

¹ A native of Tokyo.

his marriage. Sometimes I believed that he was right, feeling that his discretion and modesty prevented him at his age from touching upon anything so intimate to a young student. Sometimes I resented his reserve, considering that as he and his wife had been brought up in the conventionality of the older generation, they had not courage enough to talk quite frankly about such a subject as this. In both cases, however, no facts were given to me, and I formed these considerations on the supposed existence of a flowery romance which had led to their marriage.

This assumption of mine was not wrong. But I could only imagine one side of his love. The *sensei's* marriage contained a dreadful tragedy as well as a beautiful romance. How fatal that tragedy had been to the *sensei* was not known to his wife. She is still ignorant of the fact. The *sensei* died without telling her. He destroyed his own life before he destroyed his wife's happiness.

I am not now going to tell about this tragedy. About the love which seemed to be born to cause this tragedy between these two people, neither the *sensei* nor his wife told me anything at all, the latter from modesty, and the former, from a deeper cause.

There is, however, only one other thing remaining in my memory. Once in spring-time I went with him to Ueno, and saw a charming couple walking close together under the cherry-blossoms. They were rather conspicuous in the gay and crowded

place, and people were looking at them with more interest than at the cherry-blossoms.

"They seem to be a newly married couple," the *sensei* observed.

"Very engrossed with each other, aren't they?" I replied.

The *sensei* did not even laugh bitterly. He only changed his position so as to lose sight of the couple, and said.

"Have you ever been in love?"

"No," I replied.

"Don't you want to fall in love with somebody?"

I was silent.

"You don't deny that you want to, do you?"

"No."

"You spoke unsympathetically of that man and woman, didn't you? In those words of yours is mingled the voice of your unhappiness at not experiencing love when you are seeking for it. Don't you think so?"

"Did it sound like that?"

"Yes. One who is satisfied with his happy love always speaks in a warmer voice. But—but, mind you, love is a sin. Do you know that?"

I was frightened all of a sudden, and could not reply.

We were jostled by the crowd, who all looked

happy. So I had no time to talk until we came out into a wood where there was not a human being to be seen, and not even a cherry-blossom.

"Do you mean that love is a sin?" I asked him at once.

"Yes, of course it is." The *sensei* answered, in a tone as strong and impressive as before.

"Why?"

"You will understand before long. Indeed, you should have understood already. Your heart has been agitated with love for a long time. Has it not?"

I straightway began to examine my heart, but it was disappointingly empty, and presented nothing of interest to me.

"Indeed there is nothing like that in my heart, and I believe I am not concealing anything from you."

"You are wandering about now in search of someone to love. And you cannot help moving forward in the hope of reaching the tranquillity of the discovery."

"Indeed at the moment I don't seem to be at all."

"It was because of this longing that you came to me, wasn't it?"

"Perhaps so. But that is different from love, isn't it?"

"It is one step toward love. You came to me first as a kind of preparation for the embrace of a woman."

"They seem entirely different to me."

"No, they are the same thing. You are trying to be satisfied with me, but I, a man, can never satisfy you. What is more, because of certain conditions, I haven't even been able to make you happy. Indeed I am sorry for you. But it cannot be helped if you give me up and move forward in another direction. I am rather hoping that you will. But—"

A strange sadness oppressed me, and I said.

"Oh, well, if you believe that I am going to give you up— But indeed I am not going to give you up. Such a thought has never occurred to me."

The *sensei* did not seem to hear me.

"But you must take care, because it is a sin to love. While you are with me, however, there is no danger, though I cannot satisfy you.—Tell me, do you know how a man feels when he is bound by long black hair?"

Yes, I knew it in imagination, but not in reality. Anyway the word sin that he had used was so vague that I could not understand what it meant. Besides I felt slightly uncomfortable.

"*Sensei*, please explain more clearly what you mean by the word sin. But if you don't want to, let us not say any more about it, until the time comes when I can understand it better."

"I was wrong. I thought I was revealing a truth to you. But in fact I was only irritating you. Yes, I am to blame."

The *sensei* and I walked slowly along from the

back of the Imperial Museum toward Uguisudani. The bamboo clumps covering a part of the garden could be seen through the hedge, looking solitary and mysterious.

"Do you know the reason why I visit my friend's grave in Zoshigaya every month?" he asked, quite suddenly. He knew very well that I did not. I was silent for a while. Then as if he had realized the fact for the first time, he said.

"O I was wrong again. I was so sorry that I annoyed you, that I wanted to explain. But it has only irritated you again. That cannot be helped. Let us not talk any more about it. At any rate, don't forget that love is a sin, and at the same time, it is sacred."

I was more and more puzzled. But he did not mention love any more.

14

Being young, I was apt to let myself be absorbed in my feeling towards the *sensei*. At least it so appeared to him. Talking with him was more profitable to me than listening to the school lectures. He seemed to have had a deeper experience in life than the professors. In a word, the solitary *sensei*, who talked little, seemed to me a greater person than those renowned men who taught me from the platform.

"Don't become too much excited," the *sensei* said.

"O I am not excited, and I can trust my judgment." I replied, with assurance. But he did not trust my self-confidence.

"You are in a fever of excitement now. But when that is past, everything will be dull and monotonous. I feel conscience-stricken to be so loved by you. But when I imagine the change which must take place in you in the time to come, I feel even more uneasy."

"Do you regard me as so shallow a person? Don't you trust me any more than that?"

"I am sorry for you."

"Is it true that you cannot trust me, and perhaps hesitate to say so?"

The *sensei*, in slight annoyance, turned toward the garden. The camellias, with their heavy strong red, had been in bloom when I was there before, but they were all gone now. The *sensei* had a habit of looking at them while he was talking in the drawing-room.

"I distrust all human beings, not especially you."

As he spoke, a voice which seemed to be a goldfish vendor's was heard from across the hedge. But there was no other sound. The lane which was about seven hundred yards from the street was quieter than might have been expected. The house was hushed as usual. I knew that my words could be plainly heard by his wife, sitting in the next room, busy with needle-work or some other feminine task.

I forgot this for the moment when I asked ; " Don't you trust even your wife ? "

An expression of slight uneasiness appeared in his face, and he avoided a direct answer.

" I don't trust myself even. In other words, as I myself am unable to rely upon myself, it has become impossible for me to trust others. The only thing that such a man can do, is to curse himself."

" If you think like that, how can anyone be sure of himself ? "

" O I don't just think in this way. I have acted like this. Then I was astonished, and was terribly afraid."

I wanted to continue. But just then we heard his wife calling him twice behind the sliding-doors. When the *sensei* answered her second call, she excused herself and asked him to come to the next room. I could not guess what had made her want to speak to him, and he came back so soon that I had no time to think it out.

" At any rate, you must not put too much trust in me. For the time will come when you will repent it, then you will take most cruel revenge upon the one who betrayed you."

" What do you mean ? "

" The realization you have once knelt before the object of your adoration makes you want to put your feet on the head of that man, when the feeling of veneration has disappeared. I hope to divert your admiration now, so that you will never feel that way

toward me in future. It is better to endure a little loneliness now than to have to suffer more terrible solitude in the future. We, born in this modern age filled with a sense of freedom, independence, and self-assurance, have to endure a certain amount of loneliness as our sacrifice to the age."

I could not answer one who showed such remarkable resolution.

15

After that, I always felt disturbed whenever I looked at his wife. Did the *sensei* always adopt this attitude in his treatment of his wife? If so, was she happy? I had so little opportunity to see her, and when I did, which was rarely alone, her manner was so normal, that I could not judge by her manner whether she was satisfied or not.

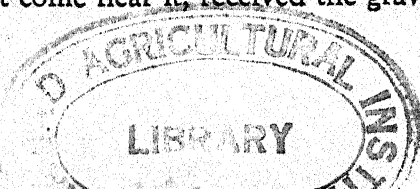
I had another doubt besides this. Where had this attitude toward human beings come from? Was it a natural outcome of his self-examination or observation of the modern age with critical eyes? He was a speculative kind of person, who liked to sit and think. Could anyone ever with a mind as alert as his determine upon such an attitude by sitting at home and judging the world? I could not think so. The *sensei* seemed to have arrived at his realization as the result of actual experience. It did not resemble the shell of a building now cold after a raging fire. The *sensei*, as he appeared to me, was

without doubt a thinker. His conclusions were not based upon merely objective observations, but seemed to have sprung from powerful events, in which he himself had taken a terrible part, at which time his blood had boiled and his pulse had jumped.

There was no need for me to try to imagine this, for the *sensei* himself had confessed it to me. Only his confession was like a crest of the cloud, which covered my head with something dreadful and far-reaching. Yet I could not understand why it was dreadful. The confession was vague, but it had apparently shaken my nerves.

I seemed to find some soul-stirring love affair at the base of the *sensei*'s philosophy of life. (This love affair was of course the one of which his wife had been the heroine.) When I remembered that he had once said that love was a sin, I felt this had been more or less the key-note of his trouble. But the *sensei* acknowledged that he was still in love with his wife. It was impossible to think that such a pessimistic view had sprung up from their love. "The recollection that you have knelt before the object of your adoration makes you wish to put your feet on the same one's head." These words of the *sensei* might apply to others, but not to this couple.

The unknown grave in Zoshigaya—this, too, came into my mind sometimes. I knew that it was the grave of a man who had been closely connected with him. I, who was approaching the *sensei*'s life, but could not come near it, received the grave into



my thoughts as a part of the life in the *sensei's* mind. The grave to me, however, was quite a dead one. To me it was not the key that was to open the door of life between us. On the contrary, it seemed rather to be a monster which stood between us and prevented the unrestrained intercourse of our friendship.

While I was puzzled by these doubts, I had another chance to talk with his wife alone. It was late autumn, and in these chilly days, no one could be indifferent to the atmosphere of bustle which attended the shortening day. At this time, a thief had stolen articles on three successive days in the *sensei's* neighbourhood. It had happened in the early hours of the evening. The thief always took something, though the article stolen had little value. The *sensei's* wife was a little disturbed. One evening the *sensei* was obliged to make one of a party at a restaurant, to entertain a doctor from his native place who had come up to Tokyo from the provincial hospital where he was working. Because of the thief, he asked me if I would come and take care of his house while he was out, and I gladly accepted.

16

It was when the city-lights were about to be lighted that I reached his house, but the punctual *sensei* had already gone. His wife led me into his study, explaining that he had just left, fearing to be late.

Beside a desk and a chair, several rows of leather bound volumes were shining in the electric light through the glass of his book-cases. She asked me to sit in front of the brazier, told me to enjoy myself reading, then she went out. I could not help feeling like a guest waiting for the host to come back, and was not very comfortable. I remained in a formal attitude, smoking, and could hear the sensei's wife talking to the maid in the sitting-room. The study was situated just round the corner from the sitting-room. So the room was quieter than the drawing-room. When she finished talking, the house was very quiet. As if waiting for a thief, I sat still, on guard.

About half an hour later, she appeared in the study again. "Why," she said, looking in, half surprised at me sitting formally like a guest. It seemed to appear ridiculous to her. "You must be uncomfortable, sitting like that."

"No, not at all."

"But you certainly must be tired."

"O no, I am not, as I have my mind concentrated on the thief."

With a cup of Indian tea in her hand, she stood there, laughing.

"But since this room is in one corner, it hardly seems the right place to watch for the thief, do you think so?" I observed.

"That is true, please come to the centre, if you don't mind. I thought you might be bored, so I

brought you some tea, but if you don't mind, you can have it in the other room."

I followed her to the sitting-room, where an iron tea-kettle was singing pleasantly on a beautifully polished oblong brazier. I had tea and cakes there. She did not drink tea, as she was afraid it would rob her of sound sleep.

"Does he often go out like this?"

"No, very seldom. Indeed he is growing more reluctant to meet people."

As she said this, there was no sign of anxiety in her manner, so I became bold.

"Then are you the only exception?"

"No, I am included."

"No, you are wrong," I interrupted, "you said that well knowing that it is not true, didn't you?"

"Why?"

"Because I am convinced that from the moment he fell in love with you he began to hate the world."

"You are a scholar, so you are skilled in pure arguments. But by the same reasoning, can we say that he began to hate me when he started to dislike the world?"

"Yes, we may say that too, but I am right in this case."

"O I don't care much for discussion. Men like it though, and seem to be perfectly happy when they are arguing about something. I wonder why they don't get tired offering and taking quite empty cups."

Her words were rather vehement. But their tone was by no means strong. She was not modern enough to find a sort of pride and satisfaction in making others acknowledge the superiority of her mind. She seemed to live by her heart, which was deeper than her mind.

17

I had something more to say to her. But I was afraid that she would think me given to vain argument, and was silent, looking into my empty cup. Then as if wishing to make me comfortable, she offered me another cup of tea, which I accepted at once.

"One, or two?" She asked, picking up the cube-sugar with a curious looking instrument, and looking at my face. She was not trying to fascinate me, but she was brimming with charm, as if trying to atone for her strong words a few minutes before.

But I drank the tea without speaking, and was still silent even after I finished it.

"How quiet you are!" She observed.

"Because I am afraid you will accuse me of being argumentative." I replied.

"O but I shan't."

That breaking the ice, we began again. We talked about the sensei who was interesting to both of us.

"May I go on from where we left off just now?"

You may think what I say only an empty argument, but indeed I am serious."

"Then do go on."

"If you should disappear suddenly, could he ever manage to live on as before?"

"O how can I tell? You will have to ask him. Why should you ask me such a thing?"

"I am in earnest. So you must not evade my question. Please answer me honestly without hesitation."

"I am trying to. But honestly I don't know."

"Then how much do you love Sensei? I asked you this, because you, and not he, can answer."

"But do you think it is necessary that I should answer such a question?"

"Why, because the answer is too obvious?"

"Well, yes."

"Can you imagine what would become of him if he should lose such a faithful companion as you? He seems to have lost interest in everything in the world. What would he do, if he lost you? Speaking only from your point of view, do you think he would be happy, or unhappy?"

"It is plain to me, though perhaps he would not agree with me. Without me, he would only be miserable. He might not be able to live. It may sound conceited, but I believe that I am making him as happy as he can be in this world, and that no other woman, no matter what her virtues might be, could take my place. Reassured by this, I can keep

my peace of mind."

"I think that faith must be a great comfort to him, don't you think so?"

"Ah, that is another question."

"Then do you continue to believe that he doesn't like you?"

"O no, I don't think he hates me. There is no reason why he should. But he began to hate the world, no, not the world, but humanity, only recently. So as one of those human beings, I have no right to claim his love, have I?"

I understood at last what she meant when she said that he hated her.

18

I admired her understanding. Her manner which was far from that of an old-fashioned Japanese woman attracted me, though she scarcely used the so-called modern words which had come into fashion in those days.

I was a careless youth, who had no experience of deep friendship with women. As a man, I always dreamed of women as the objects of my longing, purely from instinct. But it was like the feeling which takes possession of us when we look upon the lovely clouds of spring, a mere indefinite longing. So in the presence of a real woman, my feelings often underwent a violent change; instead of being attracted by the woman in front of me, I felt strangely

repelled. But my feeling was quite different while I was talking with this lady. I almost lost consciousness of the so-called inequality of the thought of men and women. I forgot that she was a woman. I looked upon her only as a faithful critic who had profound sympathy for the *sensei*.

"When I asked you why he did not take a more active part in the world, you said that he was not like that when he was young, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did. He was entirely different."

"What was he like?"

"A man thoroughly reliable, as you and I wish him to be."

"Why was it that he changed suddenly?"

"It wasn't suddenly, but very gradually."

"You have been with him all that time, haven't you?"

"Of course I have, as I am his wife."

"Then I suppose you ought to know why he has changed."

"That is what troubles me most. It is dreadful to hear you say this, but to save my life, I cannot think of any reason for the change in him. You cannot imagine how many times I have begged him to confess everything."

"And what is his answer?"

"He says that he has nothing to confess, and there is nothing for me to worry about. He never takes me seriously, but only says that his nature has changed like this."

I was silent. She, too, stopped talking. No sound was heard from the maid in the servant's room, and the thought of the thief had disappeared entirely from my mind.

"You don't think I am responsible for this change in him?" she said suddenly.

"O no," I replied.

"O please don't hesitate to speak the truth. I would rather be torn to pieces than be held responsible for this thing." Again she observed. "I have always meant to do the best I can for him, I am sure you know that."

"And Sensei knows that, I assure you. It's all right, please be comforted and don't worry."

She levelled the ashes in the brazier, and poured water into the iron kettle, which stopped singing at once.

"Sometimes when I can no longer endure the strain, I beg him to tell me what is wrong with me and help me to correct it. Then he always says that I have nothing to correct, assuring me that it is he who is at fault. And I become sadder and sadder until I weep with the desire to know my fault."

There were tears in her eyes.

Up to this time, I had regarded her as a woman of understanding. But as we talked, her manner had become gradually different. Instead of appeal-

ing to my mind, she began to impress my heart. There was no difficulty in their married life, or rather there should have been none, yet there was something wrong. But when she tried to look for it, there was nothing to put her hand on. This was the root of her trouble.

She affirmed that because of his pessimistic attitude towards the world, he had come to dislike her. But this reasoning did not satisfy her. On the contrary, her mind dwelt on the idea that his hatred for the world had sprung from his dislike of her. But try as she might, she failed to find proof for this. The *sensei's* attitude was always that of a good husband, kind and considerate at all times. His wife, who had tried to bury the doubt which lay like a lump on her heart in the affectionate intimacies of everyday life, disclosed it to me that night.

"Tell me," she said, "which is responsible for the change in him, I, or your so-called philosophy of life? O please be frank, I entreat you."

It was far from me to conceal anything from her. How could any answer that I could give satisfy her when I knew nothing whatsoever of the matter? And I believed there was something which was beyond my knowledge. So all I could say was, "I don't know."

As soon as I answered, her face changed and showed the miserable expression of one who could not get what she wanted. And I added at once.

"But I swear that *Sensei* never dislikes you. I

am only repeating what I have heard from Sensei himself. And he is not a liar, is he ? ”

She was silent. Then after a while she said.

“ To tell the truth, there is something. ”

“ Is it about the cause of his change ? ”

“ Yes. If it is the cause, I at least shall be relieved of responsibility. ”

“ What is it ? ”

She looked at her hands on her lap, hesitating.

“ Will you judge it for me, if I tell you ? ”

“ I will do the best I can. ”

“ But I don't tell you all. He will not permit it. So I shall tell you as far as I can. ”

Excited and tense, I swallowed hard.

“ While he was yet a university student, he had a very intimate friend, who died just a few weeks before their graduation, quite suddenly. ”

She added in a very low tone, as if whispering, “ In fact, he committed suicide. ” Her tone was so strange that I could not resist asking, “ Why ? ”

“ That is all I can say. But it has been since that that Sensei has become like this little by little. I don't know why he died. Probably Sensei doesn't either. At any rate, it is not hard for me to conclude that he has changed since then. ”

“ Is the grave in Zoshigaya that friend's ? ”

“ That I am not allowed to tell you. But can the death of one's best friend be the sole cause of such a change ? I am so anxious to know, and I want to hear your opinion. ”

My judgement was against it on the whole.

20

I tried to comfort her as far as the facts that I knew allowed me. She, too, seemed to want me to console her as much as possible. So we continued our talk about the *sensei*. But I was entirely in ignorance of the root of all the trouble. And her uneasiness, too, came from a doubt which was indeed like a thin drifting cloud. Even she herself did not know much about the true state of things. Besides she could not tell all she knew. So I, the comforter, and she, the comforted, were perhaps both being tossed on the waves of uncertainty. And thus floating in doubt, she never relinquished her effort to reach out her hand and clutch at my dubious judgement.

As soon as the *sensei*'s footsteps were heard in front of the house at about ten o'clock, she, as if forgetting everything we had been talking about, stood up, quite regardless of me who sat before her, and greeted him just as he opened the entrance-door. I, left alone, followed her. The maid did not appear, she must have been dozing in her room.

The *sensei* was in rather a good temper. But his wife was even more high-spirited. I, who could not forget the glittering drops in her beautiful eyes and the contraction of her black eyebrows a few minutes before, watched the change in her face care-

fully as something remarkable. If it had not been a pretence—I could not believe it possible—her confession might be regarded as a woman's caprice especially intended to play on my feelings. But it never occurred to me to watch her so critically. I was rather relieved that she became cheerful all at once. And I concluded that there was no serious cause for anxiety about them.

The *sensei* asked me, laughing, "Thank you very much. Has a thief come?" and added, "Aren't you disappointed not to find him?"

When I took my leave, she said that she was very sorry, which sounded like a joke, meaning that she felt sorry because the thief had not come when I was waiting for him, rather than because I had wasted the evening on such a useless quest. So saying, she wrapped up the cakes which I had left, and handed them to me. I put the package in my sleeve, and hurried on my way through the chilly lonely lanes to the lively town.

I have taken the account of that night out of my memory and recorded its details because we cannot do without them. But to tell the truth, I did not regard the conversation of that evening very seriously when I walked from the *sensei's* house with the cakes in my sleeve. At noon on the next day, when I returned from school to take lunch, and looked at the package of cakes on my desk, I at once attacked one decorated with chocolate. And while I was eating it, I realized that the man and woman

who gave it to me were after all one of the few happy couples existing in the world.

The autumn passed and winter came uneventfully. As I visited the *sensei*'s house, I asked his wife to take care of my clothes. It was after that that I, who had never worn *juban*¹ before, began to wear one with a black collar over my shirt. She, who had no children, was glad to undertake that task of keeping me in order, saying that it was good for her, as it occupied the time which sometimes hung heavily on her hands.

"This is home-made cloth, isn't it? I have never had a *kimono* of such thick strong material before. It is very hard to push the needle through it. I have broken two needles already."

This complaining did not indicate that she regarded the work as a nuisance.

21

When winter came, it so happened that I had to return home. My mother wrote to me saying that my father's health was far from satisfactory. She begged me to come back home if possible, as he was old, though, in her opinion, we need be anxious about no sudden change.

My father had had kidney trouble for several years. As generally happens with those over middle

¹ A kind of underwear for Japanese *kimono*.

age, this was chronic. So he himself, as well as his family, firmly believed that by constant caution, he was in no immediate danger. And he always boasted to his friends that it was because of his constant care that he had kept in such good condition. According to my mother's letter, however, he had suddenly become giddy and fainted while he was working in the garden. "They thought it was a slight fit of apoplexy, and treated him accordingly. But later the doctor began to wonder and diagnosed it as a result of the kidney trouble.

I still had a few weeks before the winter holidays when my mother's letter came. Thinking at first that I could wait until the school closed, I delayed for a day or two. During that time, the picture of my father lying in bed and my mother worrying about him appeared so constantly and pained me in such a way that I decided to return at once. In order to save the time and trouble of having money sent from home, I decided to ask the *sensei* to lend me what was needed, at the same time saying goodbye to him.

The *sensei* had a slight cold, and did not want to go out into the drawing-room, so he asked me to come to his study. The charming soft sunshine, rare in winter, shone down through the window-panes on the table-cloth. There was a huge brazier in this sun-lit room, and with the help of the steam from the basin boiling on it, the *sensei* was trying to ease his breathing.

"Such a slight illness as a cold is rather uncomfortable, isn't it? I feel as if I would rather be seriously ill," he said, and smiling bitterly, looked at my face.

The *sensei* had never been seriously ill before, and I was almost tempted to laugh when I heard him say this.

"I can put up with a cold, but I have no desire for more serious illness. It is the same with you, isn't it? If you ever had a serious disease, you would understand it."

"Do you think so? But I should rather be taken seriously ill and die."

I did not pay much attention to what he said, but immediately telling him of my mother's letter, asked him if he would lend me some money.

"O then you need it at once, don't you? But I think we have that much in our house, so you can have it now."

The *sensei* called his wife, and asked her to bring the money. When she took the bank-notes out of a drawer of some cabinet in the back-room, she put them in a white paper in a neat pile and said, "O I am very sorry. You must be anxious about your father."

"Did he faint many times?" The *sensei* asked.

"It didn't say so in the letter. But do they faint again and again?"

"Yes."

For the first time I was informed that his mother-

in-law had died from the same illness.

"He will not recover, anyhow," I said.

"Perhaps not. If I could take his place, I would, willingly.—Is his stomach upset?"

"O I am not sure. But it didn't say so in the letter, so perhaps not."

"Is that so? Then he is all right yet," his wife observed.

I left Tokyo that night.

22

My father was not so ill as I expected. When I reached home, however, he sat cross-legged on his bed, and said, "They are so worried about me that I am obliged to keep still like this. But really, I can get up now." On the next day, he insisted on having his bed put away, ignoring my mother's entreaties. As she reluctantly folded the heavy quilts, my mother said, "Your father has become much brighter since you came back." But his energy did not appear unnatural.

My elder brother's profession took him to far-away Kyushu, and it was not easy for him to come and see his parents, except on the most important occasions. My younger sister was married, and lived in another province. It was impossible for her, too, to return home in time, when anything happened. Of the three children, I was the most available. And it was a great comfort to my father

that I came back home before the vacation, obeying my mother and sacrificing my lectures.

"I am very sorry to have disturbed your study for such a slight illness as this. Your mother made too much fuss about it in her letter," he said. Not only by these words, but also by having the bed-clothes put away, he tried to show that he was as well as he had been before.

"Father, you must take particular care, lest you should be taken ill again." He listened to my warning with satisfaction, but not seriously, and replied.

"O no, I am all right, I need only be careful as usual."

In fact, he looked quite all right. He walked about the house at will, and never became breathless or giddy. Only his colour did not look normal, but as that was usual with him, we scarcely noticed it.

I wrote to the *sensei*, and thanked him for his kindness in lending me the money, and told him that I would bring it back when I returned to Tokyo in January. I informed him that my father was better than I had expected, that there might be no need for us to worry at present, and that he neither felt dizzy, nor had any trouble with his stomach. But it was only on the last page that I inquired about his cold, because I did not think it the least bit serious.

When I posted that letter, I never dreamed that he would answer. I talked with my parents about the *sensei*, and thought of his study which was in far-away Tokyo.

"You had better take some dried mushrooms as a present to him when you go to Tokyo next time."

"Yes, but I wonder if he eats things like that."

"They are not especially good, but I suppose no one actually dislikes them."

It was a shock to me to think of the *sensei* in connection with the mundane dried mushrooms.

When I received an answer to my letter, I was surprised, especially when I read it, for he wrote about nothing in particular. I concluded that he wrote to me only from kindness, and that simple letter made me very happy. It was in fact the first letter that I received from him.

When I speak like this, it may make the readers think that we were later accustomed to write to each other often. But it was not so. He never wrote to me much. I got only two letters from him in all his life, one, this simple answer, and the other, a very long one which he addressed exclusively to me just before his death.

As it was not good for his illness to take exercise, my father scarcely went out, though he left his bed. Once when he went into the garden in the afternoon of a very calm day, I was with him, lest something might happen to him. I offered him my shoulder on which to rest, but he smilingly refused it.

In order to amuse my father, I often sat with

him at Japanese chess. It was so cold that we had no courage to drag ourselves away from the warm sunken fireplace with its wadded covering, so we placed the chess-board on the quilt and played comfortably. We did not even take our hands out, and as it came to our turn to play, we would take one hand from under the cover, make a move and put it back. Sometimes we lost some of the chessmen, and did not know it until the next game. It was my mother who usually found them in the ashes, and picked them out with the tongs, which was quite a ridiculous sight.

"We cannot play go¹ on the sunken fireplace, because the board is raised too high on its legs. But we can play chess comfortably here. It is very convenient for us lazy men. Let us play once more."

Whenever my father won, he always insisted upon another game. And so he did even when he did not win. He loved to play chess at the fireplace, and it did not matter to him whether he won or not. I was moderately diverted by this old men's amusement as long as it was new. But as we went on day after day, it was hardly exciting enough to satisfy my youthful energy. I often stretched my arms and even yawned.

I thought of Tokyo. I heard the beat of my rich blood in the depth of my heart, which seemed to be repeating, "Do something, do something."

¹ A kind of indoor game which is a little different from Japanese chess.

Strangely enough I felt from some subtle consciousness that this sound of the heart was strengthened by the *sensei's* existence.

I contrasted my father with the *sensei*. From the world's point of view, both were so quiet that their lives did not even make a stir. Unknown and disregarded, theirs were the most insignificant existence in the world. Yet my father, who loved to play chess, was unsatisfactory to me even as a companion for games. But the *sensei*, whom I never visited for amusement, influenced my mind far more strongly than those friends with whom I played. As the word mind is too cold an expression, I would rather say my heart. If I had said in those days that the *sensei's* power was penetrating my flesh, or his life was flowing in my blood, it would never have sounded at all extravagant to me. I was surprised as if I had discovered a great truth when it suddenly occurred to me that my father was my real father, and the *sensei* was obviously no blood-relation to me.

As I began to grow tired of my surroundings, my parents, too, gradually lost the fresh interest they had felt in me. I think every student who returns home for the summer holiday has this experience. After about a week of extreme welcome and entertainment, the family is apt to become gradually indifferent, until the student feels neglected as if he were not wanted. My parents' regard, too, passed its height during my stay. Besides, whenever I returned from Tokyo, I brought home something

strange, which neither my father nor my mother could understand. Like a Christian bringing the influence of his strange doctrine to a Confucian's home in old days, what I brought from Tokyo did not harmonize with my parents' way of life. Of course I tried to conceal this strange thing from them, but as it belonged to me like a part of my body, they could not miss seeing it in spite of all I could do. Consequently, I began to feel uncomfortable, and longed to return to Tokyo as soon as possible.

My father's illness remained about the same. He did not seem to become worse or better. As a precaution we sent for a doctor from the distant town, and asked him to examine the patient carefully, but his diagnosis was the same as the other's, no change being perceived. I decided to leave home a few days before the term opened. By the perversity of human feelings, both my father and my mother objected to this plan.

"Are you going so soon? Isn't it too early?" my mother said.

"You won't be late, if you stay four or five days more," my father observed.

But I did not change the day that I had fixed for my departure.

24

When I returned to Tokyo, the gay New Year's decorations had been already removed. The street

was exposed to the chilly wind, and not a vestige of the New Year gaiety was anywhere to be seen.

Soon after my arrival I went to see the *sensei*, to return the money he had lent me. I took the dried mushrooms with me, which I put in front of his wife, saying that they were my mother's present, for it seemed rather strange to give them to her without a word. They were in a new cake box. Thanking me politely, she withdrew with the box, and was surprised to find how light it was, and asked me, "What kind of cakes are these?" On such an intimate occasion as this, she showed a childlike candid disposition.

Both she and the *sensei* asked me many questions about my father. He said, "Indeed, judging from what you say, he does not appear to be in any danger now. But with that disease, you must be very careful." The *sensei* knew far more about kidney trouble than I did.

"It is one of the marked characteristics of that particular trouble that the patient is unconscious of his condition. An officer that I knew who was suffering from it, died quite suddenly, so suddenly that we could not believe that he was dead. Even his wife, who was sleeping in the same room, was not aware when he died. At midnight he wakened his wife saying that he was in pain, then they went to sleep again, and in the morning, he was found dead. His wife thought all the time that he was sound asleep beside her."

I had been optimistic up to this moment, but this made me suddenly uneasy.

"Do you think it will be the same with my father? We cannot say no, can we?"

"What does the doctor say?"

"He says he cannot be well again, but there may be no sudden change for the time being."

"Then he may be all right, if the doctor diagnosed it in that way. The man that I spoke of was one who had been ignorant of his illness. Besides he was a very rash soldier."

I was comforted a little. The *sensei*, who was watching the change in me, added.

"But sick or well, a human being is delicate. We cannot tell when, by what, and in what way we may die."

"Are you, too, thinking about such things?"

"Yes, even I, who am always well, sometimes think about it."

A shadow of a smile appeared about his mouth.

"Don't people often die suddenly, quite naturally? And do not some quit this world in a moment, using unnatural means?"

"What do you mean?"

"It is not clear to me, but I think all who commit suicide are using unnatural means. Don't you think so?"

"Then those who are killed by others, too, die by such means, don't they?"

"I never thought of that. But that is true, too."

I left him then. I did not worry much about my father's illness. The *sensei's* words about natural and unnatural death left a very slight impression, which disappeared soon and did not trouble my mind. I had to begin to think seriously about my graduation essay, which I had made several unsuccessful attempts to write.

25

I was to graduate from the university in the following June, so according to regulations, I had to finish this essay by the end of April. Bending my fingers, I counted the months that remained, and could not help feeling dubious about my own self-confidence. My class-mates looked very busy. For a long time, they had been collecting the materials, and making notes. I seemed to be the only one who had done nothing. I only resolved that I would begin in earnest with the New Year. I began to work with that resolution, and soon ran into an obstacle. I, who, picturing in the air a gigantic thesis, had imagined that the outline had almost been made up in my mind, sat at my desk holding my head in dismay. Then I reduced the scope of the work and to save the trouble of arranging the thoughts systematically, I decided to collect materials found in books, and add the conclusion required.

The topic that I had chosen was closely related to the *sensei's* special subject. When I had asked

him his opinion about this choice, he had approved it. In somewhat of a panic, I went to see him at once, and asked him the titles of the books I had to read. The *sensei* gladly gave me all the knowledge that he had, and added that he would lend me two or three necessary books. Yet, the *sensei* would never put himself in the position of a supervisor.

"I haven't read much recently, so I don't know anything new. . You had better ask your professor," he said. I suddenly remembered that I had heard from his wife that he had once been a great reader, but that later, for some reason, he seemed to have ceased to be attracted by books. I put my essay aside, and asked.

"*Sensei*, why aren't you interested in books any more?"

"I don't know. Probably because I have come to the conclusion that books can't make me wiser. And—"

"And what? Have you any other reason?"

"Yes, but it is not important. I used to feel ashamed when there was anything that I did not know, when I was with other people or was asked some question. But recently, I have begun to regard ignorance as a minor defect, so I have become unable to pull myself together and read as much as I could. In short, I have grown old."

The *sensei*'s words were rather calm. He did not speak with the bitterness of one who had turned his back on the world, so I was not strongly affected.

And of course I was not in the least convinced that he was in his dotage, nor did I particularly admire his attitude. In this state of mind, I returned home.

From that time, with red eyes, I was tortured like a lunatic, haunted by the essay. I inquired of those who were one year my senior how they had graduated. One of them said that he had hurried to the university office in a rickshaw on the closing day, and had been just in time. Another told me that he had handed in the essay about fifteen minutes past five, and that it was only by the kindness of his professor that he had escaped being turned down. I felt uneasy, but at the same time I screwed up my courage. Day after day, I sat at my desk and worked as long as my energy lasted. Or in the dusky stack-room I surveyed the tall book-cases. Like a collector trying to find some curios, I scanned the titles of the books written in gold.

As the plum-blossoms began to bloom, the freezing north wind gradually veered to the south. Then, rumours of cherry-blossoms reached my ears. But, like a carriage-horse, I only looked at what was in front of me, whipped by the essay. I did not call on the sensei until the end of April when the work was finished.

It was at the beginning of summer that I was emancipated from study, when in place of the double cherry-blossoms, a mist of delicate green leaves began

to cover the branches. With the heart of a little bird which had flown away from a cage, I clapped my wings in freedom, surveying the wide world. I went at once to the *sensei*. As I walked along, I was attracted by the fresh buds on the blackish branches of the hedge of *aegle sepiaria*, and by the bright reddish-brown leaves softly reflecting the sunshine on the bare pomegranate-tree. I felt as if I were seeing them for the first time in my life.

The *sensei*, looking at my happy face, said, "Did you finish your essay? Congratulations." And I replied, "Yes, it's finished, thank goodness. I have nothing to do now."

In fact, at that time, I was so happy that I felt as if I had completed my life's work, and there was nothing left for me but enjoyment. I was so pleased with my essay that I did not hesitate to speak about it to the *sensei*. He listened to me in his usual way, saying, "O yes," or "Is that so?" but made no further comment at all. I was discouraged, rather than displeased. Yet on that day, my spirit was so light that I even attempted to stir up the *sensei* who seemed to me terribly slow. I tried to take him out into the expanse of nature which had begun to revive with beautiful green.

"Sensei, let us go for a walk. It's much nicer to be out of doors."

"Where shall we go?"

I did not care where, I only wanted to go to the suburbs with him.

An hour later, the *sensei* and I had left the city as I purposed, and were walking in a quiet place which resembled at the same time both a small town and a village. I picked a tender young leaf from the hedge of Chinese hawthorns, made a leaf-flute, and began to blow. I had once known a boy from Kagoshima, from whom I had caught the art of playing the leaf-flute, so I was more or less of an expert. While I proudly exhibited my ability, the *sensei* walked on indifferently, without looking at me.

Soon we came to a mansion on a hill, so surrounded by trees that it looked as if the young leaves had locked it up. Glancing at the plate on the gate, which bore the name So-and-so Garden, we knew that it must belong to some institution. Gazing at the entrance where a gentle slope began, the *sensei* asked if we should go in, and I replied at once, "I suppose it is a nursery, isn't it?"

Winding our way upwards through the plantation, we found a house on the left. The sliding-doors were all open, but not a soul could be seen; the empty house looked large, and only the goldfish in the basin under the eaves moved to and fro.

"How quiet! May we go on without permission?" the *sensei* observed.

"I think we can," I replied.

We proceeded. But there was not a soul to be seen. The flaming azaleas were in full bloom. The *sensei* pointed to a tall one of orange hue, and said:

"I suppose this is *kirishima*."¹

A garden of peonies covered a plot about twenty feet square, but it was too early for the flowers. The *sensei* stretched his limbs on an old Japanese bench by the peony garden, and I sat down on the edge and smoked. The *sensei* was looking into the clear blue sky, and I was absorbed by the leaves around me. Fixing my eyes on them, I wondered at the variety of their colours. Not a single leaf had the same colour as another even on one maple-tree. There was a breeze, and the *sensei*'s hat, perched on the top of a young cedar, fell to the ground.

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I snatched the hat from the ground, and flicking off some red clay, said. "Sensei, your hat fell down."

"O thanks."

The *sensei* half raised his body and took the hat, then still in this half recumbent posture, he asked me a strange question.

"Is your father well off, may I ask?"

"No, he has very little property."

"It seems rude to question you further, but about how much?"

"He has a little land and some rice-fields, but almost no money, I think."

¹ A kind of azalea.

This was the first time that the *sensei* had ever referred seriously to the economic condition of my family. And of course I, on my part, had never asked him anything about his property. When I first knew him, I had wondered how he had managed to live without seeming to do anything. And since then, I had never been able to satisfy myself on the subject. But I had never been able to bring myself to ask about anything so personal. In my mind, which had been feasting upon the soft colour of the leaves, this doubt now was revived.

"And what about you, Sensei? How much property have you?"

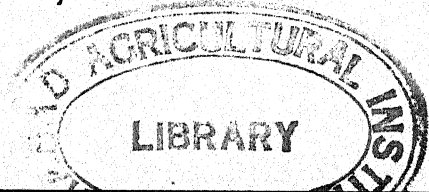
"Do I look like a man of property?"

The *sensei* was always rather simple in his dress. His family was very small, so his house was not large. But it was clear even to an outsider like me that he was in comfortable circumstances. There was no trace of frugality even though we could hardly call his method of living luxurious.

"Yes, you appear so to me," I replied.

"Of course I have something. But I can hardly be called a man of wealth. If I were, I should build a bigger house."

He had got up and was sitting cross-legged on the bench. He paused, and began to draw with his bamboo stick some figures on the ground which looked like circles. Then he placed his stick erect as if it were fastened in the earth, and said; "But I was once wealthy!"



As he said this partly to himself, I did not answer.

"I say, I was once wealthy," he repeated, this time apparently addressing me, and smiled, looking at my face. But I was still silent, because I did not know what to say. Then the *sensei* asked, "How is your father now?"

I had not heard anything about him since January. The simple note which came with the money order every month was written by him as usual, but there was nothing about his illness. Besides his writing was steady, showing no indications of the shaky hand that usually goes with kidney trouble.

"He never refers to it in his letters. I think he is all right."

"I am very glad if that is really so.—But since he has that illness—"

"I suppose it is hopeless after all, isn't it? Since they say nothing about it I suppose he is in no immediate danger."

"Yes?"

I supposed what he asked about my father's condition and his property was simply a matter of ordinary conversation, which had occurred to his mind at the time. But there was a significance behind his questions, which closely connected the former with the latter. I, who lacked his experience, had of course no idea of this.

"If your father has some property, you had better ask him to divide it now. You may think this advice is intrusive, but you had better do it. It is much better to get your share while he is alive. It is usually the property that creates complications in families after the death of the father."

"Yes."

I did not pay much attention to what he said. I was sure that none of my family was disturbed by such a matter or in this way. Besides this advice was so practical coming from the *sensei* that I was rather surprised. But my usual regard for my seniors kept me silent.

"Forgive me for speaking as if I expected your father to die. But we are mortal. Even those of us who seem in perfect health can never know when they will die."

The *sensei's* tone was unusually bitter.

"O I don't mind it at all," I replied.

"How many brothers and sisters have you?" Then he asked about the members of my family and relatives including my uncles and aunts, and added:

"Are they all honest?"

"There seems to be no one who is particularly dishonest, for most of them are country-people."

"Why do you think countrymen are specially noted for honesty?"

I was puzzled by this cross-examination. But

he gave me no time to think out an answer.

"I should say that countrymen are more dangerous than those in cities. You said that there is no villain among your relations, but do you think there are any people who are naturally wicked? No, there is no such thing as a natural villain. People are usually good, at least normally good. The horrible thing is that these good ordinary people become villains as the result of some sudden circumstance. So we have always to be careful."

It seemed to be impossible for him to stop. Again I wanted to say something, when suddenly a dog began to bark. The *sensei* and I, frightened, looked back.

Near the plantation of young cedars beside and behind the bench, bamboo clumps grew about eleven feet square, so thick that they seemed to hide the ground. The dog, putting his head in and out from the bamboo clumps, barked loudly. Then a boy about ten years old came running up, and scolded the dog. Without taking off his black cap with its school badge, he crossed over to the *sensei*, and bowed.

"Didn't you see anyone in our house when you came here, sir?" He asked.

"No, no one."

"But Mother and Sister were in the back-room."

"O were they?"

"Yes, sir, you had better say 'good afternoon' to them, and then come in."

The *sensei* smiled bitterly. He took his purse from his bosom, and put a five *sen* coin in the boy's hand.

"Say to your mother that we want to take a rest here. Will you?"

The boy, with his clever eyes brimming with merriment, nodded.

"I am playing soldiers, I am a scout-master," he said, and ran down the lane between the azaleas. The dog, coiling his tail higher, followed. After a while, two or three boys of the same age ran toward the scout-master.

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Interrupted by the boy and the dog, we could not finish what we had been talking about. Consequently I could not make head or tail of what he said. I was entirely free from anxiety concerning my father's property, about which he felt so uneasy. It was natural for one of my disposition and in my circumstances to have no room in the mind for such material matters. Perhaps it was because of my youth which knew little of the world, and of my having no experience of real want; at any rate, the questions about money did not interest me at all.

The only thing that I wanted to have thoroughly explained was what he said about a human being becoming wicked as the result of some sudden circumstance. I understood the words, but I wanted

to know more about their true meaning.

After the boy and the dog had left, the vast garden of young leaves regained its quiet, and we sat still, as if shut up in silence. Then the brilliant sky gradually faded. Almost all the trees in front of us were maples, and the delicate green leaves opened on their branches, bright and watery. But those leaves seemed to begin to look darker. I heard a waggon rumbling along the far-away road, and imagined a villager carrying plants and vegetables to a local fête. The *sensei*, too, heard it, and rose like a man awakened from a reverie.

"Let's be going home now. The days have begun to lengthen, but as we are thus idling, it has become dark, though we don't know how many hours have passed."

The back of his *haori*¹ was covered with something that had been on the bench, and I brushed away these relics of his recumbent idleness with both my hands.

"O thanks. There is no gum, is there?"

"It is all right now."

"This *haori* is a new one. My wife made it only the other day, so if I go back with it dirty, she will scold me. Thank you."

We came to the house half-way down the gentle slope. On the verandah, which had been deserted when we came, the mistress of the house and a girl

¹ A Japanese coat.

of about fifteen were winding yarn. Standing beside the big basin, we saluted them, and asked their pardon for our intrusion. "You gave us no trouble at all," she said, and thanked the *sensei* for his present to the boy.

When we had walked about eight hundred yards from the gate, I resolved to continue our conversation, and began.

"What did you mean when you said a little while ago a human being can become wicked as the result of some sudden circumstance?"

"What did I mean? O nothing special.—In a word, it is a fact, not a theory."

"I don't care if it is a fact. But what I want to ask you is what you mean by the words sudden circumstance. What do you call a sudden circumstance?"

The *sensei* began to laugh, as if he thought it hardly worth while to explain it seriously, the opportunity having passed.

"Money, I say. When a man sees money, he becomes wicked at once, however noble he may be before."

To me his answer was too matter-of-fact, and unsatisfactory. He had lost interest, and I too felt disappointed. Trying to look indifferent, I began to walk more rapidly, and the *sensei* suddenly fell behind. Then he said:

"There, you see."

"What?"

"Your temper, too, changes according to my answer, doesn't it?" he said, looking at me, as I stopped and turned to wait for him.

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At that moment I felt a little resentment towards him. After we began to walk again side by side, I purposely avoided asking him what I wanted to know. I was not sure whether the *sensei* noticed my mood or not, but he did not seem to be influenced by it at all. As he walked along in his usual silence and composure, I became aroused. I began to feel inclined to argue and confute him.

"Sensei."

"Yes?"

"You were excited a little while ago, when we were resting in that garden. I have seldom seen you so moved, so I feel as if I had seen a strange sight."

The *sensei* was silent for a while. I thought that I had hit my mark. But at the same time I felt perhaps I had missed it. Not knowing what to think, I decided to say no more. Then, the *sensei* suddenly drew to the side of the lane, and performed various natural functions, under the finely trimmed hedge. I blankly waited for him there.

"I beg your pardon," he said, and resumed his walk. In the end I gave up the idea of confuting him. The road along which we were walking took on a lively aspect. As the slopes or flats of fields

which we had seen here and there had entirely disappeared from our eyes, the houses to the right and left began to form regular lines. Yet at the corners of these houses were tendrils of peas clinging to bamboo-sticks, or plots for hens covered with wire-netting, looking quiet and restful. We passed by the pack-horses coming continuously from the city. I, who was apt to be attracted by these things, had walked off the question which had troubled my mind. When the *sensei* returned to it suddenly, I had really forgotten it.

"Did I look so much excited?"

"Not very much, but a little."

"Oh, well, I don't care if I did. Indeed it's usual with me. My emotion is always aroused when I think of that matter. I don't know whether you will agree with me or not, but I am a very revengeful man. I never forget a humiliation or loss for a long time, even ten or twenty years."

His tone was more excited than before. But what startled me was not the tone, but the words themselves. Such a confession from the *sensei* was utterly unexpected. I had never imagined that such tenacity was hidden in his character. I had always thought him rather gentle if not weak. And on his fragile, but noble disposition I laid the foundation of my admiration and love. I, who had tried to attack the *sensei* merely from a momentary whim, was shaken by these words. But the *sensei* resumed.

"I was deceived. I was betrayed by my blood-

relations. I can never forget that. They, who seemed to be honest before my father, soon after his death, became wicked, unforgivably wicked. I have been burdened with the humiliation and loss that they caused me ever since my boyhood. Perhaps I shall never get rid of that feeling. I shall never be able to forget that. But I have not yet taken revenge upon them. Yet I think I am having what is more than a revenge on individuals. I not only hate them, but have learned to detest the whole human race which they represent. I am sure that is enough."

I could not even attempt to console him.

31

We reached no conclusion that time. I was so nonplussed by his attitude, that I had no courage to continue the subject.

We took the electric-car from the outskirts of the city, but we hardly opened our mouths during the whole way back. We had to go different ways soon after we had got off. The *sensei*, however, was a different person then, and said in a tone more cheerful than usual, "You are going to have an easy time from now to June, perhaps the pleasantest time in your life. So make the most of it and enjoy yourself." I took off my hat, smiling, and, looking into his face, wondered in what obscure corner of his heart his hatred of the human race was hidden, for not the slightest vestige of this pessimism was

betrayed either in his eyes or his mouth.

I confess I owed a great deal to the *sensei* in the realm of thought. But sometimes he seemed utterly unable to help me intellectually because of his persistent silence regarding his own experiences. Our conversations often led into blind alleys. The one we had just finished was in this class, and I felt heartily dissatisfied with the whole thing.

Finally some days later, I confessed this to the *sensei*. He was smiling when I began.

"I shouldn't mind if these unsatisfactory results were owing to a dullness of intellect. But your mind is perfectly clear. It is simply because you don't choose to express what you feel, which doesn't seem fair to me, does it?"

"O no, you are mistaken. I am not concealing anything from you."

"O yes, you are."

"I am afraid you are confusing my intellectual opinions with what you would like to know of my past. I never try to conceal what I am thinking, even though it may not be worth anything. Because there is no necessity for concealment. But if you require that I should unfold all my past for your inspection, that is a different matter."

"No, that is not it. I value your opinions because they are the result of your past experiences. When I am obliged to look at one without connecting it with the other, your opinions lose their value. You cannot satisfy me by giving only a soulless doll."

The *sensei*, as if astonished, gazed at me, and his hand, holding a cigarette, slightly trembled.

"You are bold."

"No, I am only serious. I am wishing with all my heart to learn something from life."

"Even at the expense of exposing my past?"

The word *expose*, with its terrible significance, suddenly beat upon my ears. I felt as if the man sitting in front of me were not the *sensei* whom I had been admiring, but a poor sinner. His face was pale.

"Are you really in earnest?" he repeated. "My experience in life has taught me not to believe people. So, to tell the truth, I distrust you, too. But I don't want to. You seem too innocent to be insincere. I have longed to trust someone, even though it is only one man, before I die. Is it possible that you are that one single man? Would you be that to me? Are you really in earnest?"

"Indeed if there has been anything true in my life, the words that I have just spoken are sincere." My voice quivered.

"Very well," he said, "I will tell you. I will tell you all my past. But— No, it's all right. But I doubt if it would be of any use to you. Perhaps it may be better not to tell you. But I cannot tell you now. Remember that. I will not tell you until the time comes."

I felt a heaviness in my mind, even after I returned to my lodging.

The professors did not seem to appreciate my essay nearly as much as I did. But I passed. On the graduation day, I put on an old winter suit, which smelt of mould from its long residence in a basket-trunk. When we stood in rows in the auditorium, everybody looked over-heated. I did not know what to do with my poor body, swathed in wool which did not allow the slightest ventilation. While I stood, the handkerchief which I held was dripping with moisture.

As soon as the ceremony was over, I returned home and stripped off the woollen clothing. Opening the window of my upstairs room, I surveyed the world as far as I could through the hole of my graduation certificate rolled like a telescope. Then I threw it on my desk, and lay down in the middle of the room, with my limbs stretched. In that posture, I thought of my past, and imagined my future. This certificate, which stood as the boundary between my past and future, was a magic paper, of the greatest significance; and at the same time utterly worthless.

I was invited to dinner by the *sensei* on that day, and called on him in the evening. It had been long understood that I should not make another dinner engagement on the evening of my graduation.

The table was laid near the verandah of the drawing-room, as he had promised. The stiff thick

table-cloth with its woven pattern, reflecting the electric light, looked beautiful and pure. Whenever I took dinner at his house, they always placed the bowls and *hashi*¹ on the white linen cloth as was the custom in foreign restaurants. And that cloth was always pure white, newly washed and ironed.

"It is the same with our collars and cuffs. It is far better to have a coloured table-cloth than to use a dirty white one. If we choose white, we must keep it clean," he said. Indeed, he was rather fastidious about such things. His study was always orderly. That quality of his sometimes struck me who was rather careless about such matters.

When I once remarked to his wife that he was sensitive, she replied, "But he does not trouble himself about his dress." The *sensei*, who sat near her listening, said laughing, "To tell the truth, I am fastidious spiritually. That's why I suffer. I think it is rather stupid. Isn't it?" I could not comprehend whether he was referring to his sensitive temperament or spiritual fastidiousness. His wife, too, did not seem to understand.

That night, I sat facing him at the table with its usual spotless cloth. His wife sat between us, facing the garden.

"Congratulations," the *sensei* said, and raised his cup to me. These words did not produce the

¹ Chopsticks.

desired effect. Of course it was partly due to my inability to be perfectly happy, but in his tone there was something lacking, and I felt it did not ring true. The *sensei*, laughing, raised his cup. In that smile, I did not perceive any perverse irony, but at the same time, I could not feel that he was congratulating me from the depth of his heart. His smile told me that people in the world were accustomed to repeat congratulations on such an occasion as this.

His wife said, "Congratulations. Your father and mother must be happy." And I suddenly remembered my sick father, and thought that I would return home as soon as I could and show him this certificate.

"Sensei, where is your certificate?" I asked.

"Mine?—I wonder if I put it away somewhere. Do you know?" he asked his wife.

"Yes, surely. We have it somewhere of course."

But neither of them seemed to know where it was.

33

When we began to eat the rice, his wife told the maid to retire, and waited on us herself. This seemed to be the custom of his family in entertaining informal, friendly visitors. I had felt rather uncomfortable at first, but gradually became accustomed to it.

"Tea, or rice? O you eat a great deal, don't

you?" Thus she sometimes in a joking way spoke out without reserve. But that evening, it was too warm to eat.

"Don't you want some more? You haven't been eating much recently."

"Yes, I do. Only to-night it's rather warm."

She called the maid, who cleared away the table, and brought ice-cream and fruit instead.

"I made this myself."

She seemed to have plenty of time for making ice-cream to treat her guests. I asked for some more.

"You have finished your school at last. What are you going to do now?" The *sensei* asked, drawing his cushion toward the verandah, where he sat on the threshold leaning against the sliding-door.

I realized only that I had graduated, but had not the slightest idea about my future profession. While I was hesitating, she asked, "Are you going to be a teacher?" I was still silent. Again she spoke, "An official?" Both the *sensei* and I began to laugh at these questions.

"To tell you the truth, I have no idea. In fact, I have almost never thought about my profession. We cannot tell what kind of work suits us until we try, so it is natural that I cannot choose at once."

"Yes, that is true. But it is only because you have a little property that you can be so easy-going. Suppose you were poor? You could never take so much time."

I remembered some of my class-mates who had

been looking for positions in middle schools, long before their graduation, and secretly approved what she said, but answered.

"Perhaps I am influenced a little by Sensei."

"Then I am afraid you are badly influenced."

The sensei laughed bitterly, and said.

"I don't mind if you are influenced by me, but as I told you before, you must insist upon your father's dividing his property, while he is still alive. If you don't, you cannot tell what may happen."

I remembered that afternoon in early May when the azaleas were in full bloom and we had talked in the heart of the vast garden in the suburbs. The strong words he uttered in excitement repeated themselves in the depth of my consciousness. Not only strong, they were horrible, but at the same time enigmatical to me who knew nothing about his past.

"Are you very well-to-do?" I said, turning to his wife.

"Why do you ask me such a thing?"

"Because Sensei would not tell me, though I tried to find out."

She smiled and looked at her husband.

"We haven't very much; that is why he is silent about it, I suppose."

"But won't you tell me? Only because I want to know how much is required to live as comfortably as you and Sensei, before I return home and discuss it with my father."

The *sensei*, looking toward the garden, was smoking quite indifferently, so I had to appeal to his wife.

"We have not much, just sufficient for our living.—At any rate, you must do something, really. It will not do to live idly as *Sensei* does."

"O I am not always idling."

The *sensei*, turning only his face towards us, disapproved of his wife's words.

34

It was past ten when I left them. I was to return to my native place in two or three days, so as I turned to go, I said, "I am afraid I shan't be able to see you again for a few months."

"But you will come up to Tokyo in September, won't you?"

My student days being over, there was no particular reason why I should come back to Tokyo in September. But at any rate, I had no intention of spending the hot August in the capital, for I was in no special hurry to find some position.

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Then good-bye, take care of yourself. Perhaps we shall go somewhere, for we expect it will be very warm this summer. If we do go, we will send you a picture postcard," his wife said.

"Where are you going?"

The *sensei* was listening to this conversation, smiling, and said.

"We haven't decided even whether we will go or not."

When I turned to leave my seat, the *sensei* suddenly asked, "By the way, how is your father?" I hardly knew anything about my father's condition. I thought that he was about the same, because he had not referred to it in his letters.

"You musn't take your eyes off that disease. If it turns to uraemia it will be hopeless."

I could not understand either the word uraemia or its meaning. When I had talked with the doctor in the winter, he had not used such a word.

"Really, you must take very good care of him," his wife said, "if it attacks the brain, it will be all over. Really, it is no laughing matter."

For I, who had no experience of losing anyone from this disease, was smiling, though some uneasiness held my heart.

"As it is said to be hopeless, we cannot do anything by anxiety."

"If you can think like that, we have nothing to say."

She said this in a gloomy tone and looked down. She must have been reminded of her mother who had died from the same illness long ago. I, too, became really sorry about my father.

Suddenly the *sensei* turned to his wife.

"Shizu, do you think you will die before I do?"

"Why?"

"I don't know. I just wonder. I wonder if I

shall be the first. It is generally accepted in this world that husbands should die first, isn't it?"

"O it's not always so. But as the men are generally older than their wives—"

"Therefore they die before their wives, don't they? According to that, then I am to go to Eternity before you."

"No, you are an exception."

"Am I?"

"Because you are very strong. You have almost never been ill, have you? So I shall surely be the first to die."

"Really?"

"Of course."

The *sensei* looked at me, and I laughed.

"But if I should go first, what would you do?"

"What would I do?—"

She hesitated. A sense of sadness caused by his imaginary death seemed to have visited her heart. But when she raised her head again, she had recovered herself.

"O I couldn't do anything, could I? We can never know when we are going to die, nor can we stop the hand of Death."

She, glancing deliberately at me, said this in a lighter tone.

I resumed my seat, and listened to this conversation.

"What do you think?" the *sensei* asked.

The question whether the *sensei* would die first was of course beyond me. I only smiled.

"How can I tell?"

"Yes, we cannot help our natural death. The length of our lives is fixed even from the time of our birth. *Sensei's* father and mother died almost at the same time."

"Did they die on the same day?"

"O no, not exactly, but almost on the same day. But they died one after another."

This information was new to me. I wondered.

"How did it happen that they died like that?"

She was going to answer my question, when her husband stopped her.

"Don't talk about such a thing. It's not interesting."

He purposely flapped the fan in his hand, and turned to his wife again.

"Shizu, I will give you this house when I die."

She began to laugh.

"Then won't you give me the land, too?"

"O no, I cannot, it's not mine, you know. But instead, I will give you all I have."

"Thank you. But I don't need your foreign books, do I?"

"You can sell them to a second-hand book-seller."

"How much could I get for them?"

The *sensei* did not answer. But he continued

on the subject of his death, which neither his wife nor I could feel as a reality. And his death was always supposed to take place before his wife's. At first she pretended to take it lightly and talked idly. But gradually it affected her sensitive heart.

"How many times are you going to repeat 'if I die'? Please don't do it any more. It's ominous to talk about such a thing. If you were to die, I would do everything according to your wish. Isn't that enough?"

The *sensei*, looking at the garden, laughed. But he stopped at once talking about the thing that had made her unhappy. As it was late, I rose to go at once. He and his wife followed me to the entrance.

"Take care of your father," she said.

"Then I shall meet you in September," he said.

I bowed and stepped out of the entrance-door. The dense fragrant olive between the entrance-door and the gate stretched its branches in the dark, as if trying to block my way. I walked two or three steps, and looking at those branches covered with blackish leaves, thought of the flowers and their perfume in the coming autumn. I had long regarded this fragrant olive and his house as inseparable existences. When I casually stood in front of it and imagined the autumn when I should come here again, the electric light that had been shining from the lattice suddenly went out. The *sensei* and his wife seemed to have withdrawn. I went out alone into the dark lane.

I did not return to my lodging at once. Apart from the fact that I had some shopping to do in Tokyo, my stomach stuffed with delicacies required some exercise, I walked toward the lively town where it was still early. Among the men and the women idly moving and bustling, I found one of my friends who had graduated with me that day. He urged me to go to a bar, where I listened to his tall talk which was like the foam on beer. It was past twelve when I at last reached my room.

36

On the next day, in spite of the heat, I went around purchasing the things I had been requested to bring home. When I received the letter asking me to buy these things, I did not think it a nuisance. But when I was actually doing it, I felt it extremely troublesome. Wiping my perspiring face in the electric-car, I hated those countrymen who did not feel a bit sorry for taking my time and troubling me so much.

I had no idea of idling away this summer, and I had made my schedule. In order to carry out my programme I had to get some necessary books, and I resolved to spend half a day on the first floor of Maruzen. I stood in front of the book-cases containing those books which were closely related to my special subject, and scrutinized them from top to bottom.

The purchase that troubled me most was that of women's ornamental neckbands. The shopboy showed me an enormous number, but I did not know which ones to choose, and was at a loss. Besides, the prices were quite inconsistent. The one I thought cheap was amazingly dear, and the other which I could not venture to ask the price, because I thought it dear, was unexpectedly cheap. And I was annoyed, because I could not perceive why this difference should exist, try as I might to compare them. I was utterly perplexed, and repented that I had not asked the *sensei*'s wife to perform this task for me.

I bought a suitcase. It was of course a cheap Japanese one, but enough to overawe country-people, with its glittering metal fittings. This was at my mother's request. She had taken the trouble to write to me saying that if I graduated I should get a new suitcase and return home with my presents in it. I could not help laughing when I read that letter. It was not because I could not understand my mother's intention, but rather because the idea appealed to me as a sort of joke.

As I had told the *sensei* and his wife, I left Tokyo on the third day from that night. I, who had got much information from the *sensei* about my father's illness since winter, was, as it were, charged with the duty of taking care of him. But it did not weigh on my mind, instead, I felt sorry for my mother, fancying her left alone. It must have been

that I was expecting my father's death in some corner of my mind. When I wrote to my brother in Kyushu, I described his condition as hopeless. Once I advised him even to make time and come home to see him this summer, adding in sentimental words that they must feel helpless in that state, the old man and woman living quite alone, which should make us, their children, feel deep sympathy for them. In fact, I wrote as I thought. But when I finished writing, my feelings were quite different.

I contemplated that inconsistency of my heart in the train, and it began to seem that I was an insincere, changeable fellow, which made me uncomfortable. I thought of the *sensei* and his wife, especially the conversation at dinner three days before.

"Which one is to die first?"

Sitting alone, I repeated the question over and over again, and I concluded that no one could answer that question with confidence. But if it had been exactly known, what would the *sensei* have done? What would she have done? Probably nothing, but live on in the same manner as before (just as I could not feel any strong emotion at my father's approaching death at home). How frail human beings seemed! I regretted that they were born with a feeling of shallowness in their hearts of which they never seemed to get rid.

PART II
MY PARENTS AND I

1

WHEN I reached home, I was surprised to find my father very little changed.

"O you have come at last. I am delighted you have graduated. But wait, till I wash my face."

He had been doing something in the garden, wearing an old straw hat with a dirty handkerchief tucked in at the back and hanging like a curtain to protect the back of his neck from the sun. As he went round to the well in the back yard, the handkerchief fluttered.

My father's obvious delight at my graduation made me a little ashamed, for I looked upon it simply as the ordinary experience of any university student.

"I am delighted you have graduated," he repeated over and over again. I compared his look of pleasure with the expression on the sensei's face when he had said "Congratulations" at his table on the evening of my graduation. To me the unspoken depreciation conveyed in the congratulations of the sensei bespoke a nobler point of view than the unrestrained rapture of my father; the latter had the effect of making me a little ashamed of his country.

fied ways which clearly resulted from ignorance.

"O well, it is nothing to be so happy about. Hundreds of people graduate every year," I said at last. My father looked a little annoyed and said:

"Yes, of course. It is not the fact of your having graduated that pleased me so much. It is more than that. If only you can understand it—" I tried to make him explain further. He hesitated at first, but finally confessed.

"Well, in a word, I am the happy person. You know I am ill. When you were here last winter, I was almost certain that I should die in three or four months. But most luckily here I am still, sound of limb, able to move about, and you have graduated. That is why I am glad. Isn't it natural for a father to be happy when his son whom he has brought up finally graduates from the university while he is still alive? Probably your ideals in life are so great that your graduation seems nothing, so my raptures make you impatient. But try to think about it from my point of view. It is a little different. Yes, your graduation is a satisfaction to me, if not to you. Can't you see?"

I could think of nothing to say, feeling too much ashamed to beg his pardon, and could only sit, with downcast eyes. My father, not at all worried by his illness, seemed to have been prepared for death. Moreover, he seemed to have expected that it would take place before my graduation. How stupid I had been not to have felt my father's re-

signation ! How natural it was for him with such an outlook to be greatly affected ! I took the certificate out of my suitcase, and showed it to my parents, as if it had been a treasure. Having been crushed in the suitcase, it had lost its original shape, and my father carefully smoothed it out.

"You should have carried this in your hand," he said.

"If you had packed it in padding, it would have been better," remarked my mother who was sitting beside him.

He looked at it a while, then going to the alcove, placed the certificate in the very centre where everyone could see it. I felt quite different from my ordinary self, and found it utterly impossible to protest. So in silence I let my father do what he liked. The crumpled certificate of *torinoko*¹ paper could not easily be mended even by my father's efforts. As soon as it was put in a good position, it curled to its former shape and fell down.

2

Later I asked my mother privately about my father's condition, saying, "Father goes to the garden, and works, as if he were quite well. But is he really all right ?"

"O yes, he seems to have no trouble at all.

¹ A kind of Japanese paper.

Perhaps he is better now." I thought her remarkably unconcerned. After the manner of a woman living in the woods and fields away from the towns, she was quite ignorant. But she had been so frightened and anxious the last time he had fallen. I wondered.

"But last winter the doctor said it was hopeless, didn't he?"

"Yes, that is why I think our bodies are so wonderful. He, who was said to be so ill, is quite strong now. I was anxious about him at first, and tried to keep him quiet. But he is so wilful. He takes care of himself, but he is stubborn. When he thinks himself well, he never listens to what I say, no, never."

I remembered how he had insisted last winter on shaving, with his bed-clothes cleared away. When I remembered his words, "O I am all right now. Your mother makes too much fuss about me," I did not have the heart to blame my mother alone. Though I was on the point of saying, "But those about him must be careful," I hesitated, and was silent. Only, I told her all I knew about kidney trouble, as if she were my pupil, though most of this information was what I had got from the *sensei* and his wife. But it did not seem to affect her. All she said was, "O by the same illness? I am sorry to hear that. How old was she when she died?"

As it was no use speaking to my mother, I went straight to my father. He received my warnings

more seriously than my mother.

"Yes, you are right. It is exactly so. But at any rate my body belongs to me, and to no one else, and I ought to know best how to take care of it, because I have so much experience."

When my mother heard that, she laughed bitterly, and said, "There, you see!"

"But Father is at least prepared for the worst. That is why he is so glad about my graduation. He said so himself, that he is happy because I returned home with the certificate while he is still alive, when he expected to die before that."

"But, my dear, he only says so; he thinks in his mind that he is all right."

"Really?"

"Yes, to be sure, he is thinking he will live for ten or twenty years more, though sometimes he says things like this: 'I think I shall die soon. If I die, what will you do? Shall you live on in this house quite alone?'"

Suddenly I imagined a vast old country house with my mother left alone. After my father disappeared from this house, could we manage to keep it as before? What would my brother do? What would my mother say? Could I, thinking about this now, leave my native place and live in Tokyo with any peace of mind? Sitting face to face with my mother, I suddenly remembered the *sensei's* warning, that I should get my share of my father's property while he was still able to attend to such things.

"Well, we don't usually hear of people dying who keep talking about it day after day, so we can feel easy. For your father, too, is that kind of man, and I think he will live for many years longer. Those who are strong and never refer to their death are in far greater danger."

I listened to my mother in silence. Her idea seemed old-fashioned. I did not know upon what she based her opinion, on reasoning or on fact.

3

To celebrate my graduation, my parents began to talk about inviting our neighbours to a dinner at which we should have *sekihan*.¹ It was the very thing that I had been secretly dreading since my arrival. I at once objected to it, saying, "Please don't make a fuss about my graduation."

I hated country guests. Their only purpose in coming was to drink and eat. They were mostly the kind of people who looked forward to some event which would make them forgather at somebody's house. Even while I was a child, I hated to wait upon them. I imagined my pain would be greater, if they were my own guests. But I could hardly say to my father and mother that they should not make merry with such vulgar people. So I only

¹ Rice boiled with red beans; in Japan red and white symbolize happiness, goodluck etc.

repeated that I did not care for such extravagance.

"It is not so extravagant, as you think. Your graduation is an event which will never occur in your life again. It is reasonable to celebrate it. You must not refuse," my mother said, who seemed to regard my graduation in the same light as my marriage.

"Of course we can do without it. But you know how people talk," said my father, who disliked other people's backbiting. It was true that these foolish country-people made plenty of ill-natured remarks against people who did not do what they expected.

"The country is different from Tokyo, and very troublesome," he observed again.

"Besides it will affect your father's honour," my mother added. I could not carry my point, and began to think I would do as they wanted.

"Well, I've only been saying that you must not do such a thing for me. But if you are going to invite them because you don't want any scandal, it is a different thing. I should not insist upon what is against your interests."

"You trouble me with your reasoning," he said, with a wry face.

"O he doesn't mean that he is going to invite people for the sake of his good name, and not for you. Even you must understand that we must not fail in our duty to the world." My mother, as a woman, always confused the issue at such a time as

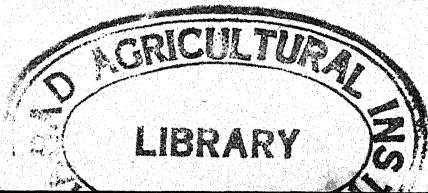
this, though her words were far more numerous than my father's or mine put together.

"I am afraid when a man studies much, he is apt to become argumentative," was all he said. But in this simple sentence, I saw the whole of the complaint which he always held against me. I did not realize how harsh my words had been, but only felt his complaint as unreasonable.

That night, my father was different, and asked me what time was most suitable for me to invite these guests. I, who was just idling in this old house, had no time more convenient than any other. This my father knew very well, which showed that he was giving way. I, too, did not cling to my previous objections, but was obedient to this calm old man. We consulted, and a day was fixed for our dinner.

While that day was yet far off, news of an important event, the Emperor Meiji's illness, reached our ears. This sad news, which was spread all over Japan by the newspapers, blew away like dust the celebration dinner which had caused the little rift in our household.

"I think we had better give it up," said my father, who was reading a newspaper with his spectacles on. In silence, he seemed to be thinking also of his own illness. I remembered the Emperor who had come to the university on our recent graduation as he had been accustomed to do every year.



The old house was too large for the small family and it was always hushed. In the midst of that quiet, I unpacked my basket-trunk and began to read. But why was I so restless? I could study far better on the first floor of my lodging in busy Tokyo, turning over the pages one after another with the sound of the far-away tramcars in my ear, but with concentrated interest on what I was doing.

Leaning against the desk, I often dozed. Sometimes I took out my pillow and indulged in a regular nap. As I woke up, I heard the cicadas, which, seeming to have come into my consciousness while I was still dreaming, suddenly disturbed the depth of my ears with their noisy music. Sometimes they made me sad, as I listened to their never changing refrain.

I wrote to my friends, sometimes simple postcards, and sometimes long letters. Some of them had remained in Tokyo, but others had returned to their distant native place. I received some answers, but some of my letters did not even reach those to whom they were addressed. Of course I never forgot the *sensei*. I decided to send him a letter closely written on three sheets of copy paper describing my life since my return home. When I put it into an envelope, I wondered if he was still in Tokyo. When the *sensei* and his wife went away, a woman of about fifty who had her hair cut short and hang-

ing down used to come and take care of their house. Once I asked the *sensei* who she was, but instead of answering, he countered by asking me what I thought of her. I had mistaken her for one of his own relations, and he corrected it, saying, "O I have no relations." Indeed he had no intercourse at all with what relatives he had in his native place. This particular woman was a relation of his wife's. As I went to post my letter, I suddenly remembered her figure, with a narrow *obi* put on comfortably. I wondered whether she would have tact and kindness enough to send my letter to the *sensei*'s resort, if it arrived after he had gone. Yet I knew quite well that there was nothing important in it. Only I was lonely, and wanted an answer. But I never got it.

My father did not like to play chess as he had last winter. The chess-board was put away in the corner of the alcove, covered with dust. Especially since the Emperor's illness he seemed to be plunged in deeper thought. He waited for the newspaper every day, and when it came, he was the first to read it. Then he took the trouble to bring it to me.

"Look at this. Today, too, there are minute details of the Son of Heaven's condition."

My father always spoke of the Emperor as the Son of Heaven.

"It is a presumptuous comparison, but my illness is the same as that of his august majesty, isn't it?"

His face was clouded with deep concern. Through my mind, too, flashed an anxiety that my father was being exposed to danger every moment.

"But it may not be so dangerous for him, for even such an insignificant fellow as I can remain alive like this."

While he thus reassured himself as to his strength, he seemed to have a premonition of what was about to befall him.

"He is really afraid of his illness. He seems to have no idea now of living on ten or twenty years more," I said to my mother, who looked perplexed.

"Suppose you encourage him to play chess again."

I took down the chess-board from the alcove, and dusted it.

5

My father gradually began to lose his vigour. The old straw hat with the handkerchief hanging down from behind gradually fell into disuse. Whenever I looked at the hat on the dark sooty shelf, I felt more and more pity for its owner. I was anxious about him when he moved about as actively as he had before, and urged him to be cautious. But when he began to sit still brooding, I felt that after all he had been stronger when he had seemed careless. I often talked with my mother about his condition,

"His feelings affecting his body, that is all," said she, who connected my father's illness with the Emperor's. But I was not convinced.

"O no, it is not his spirit, but indeed his body that is not well, isn't it so? He seems to be getting worse." I replied. I wondered if we should send for a reliable doctor from the far-away town.

"You must be unhappy this summer. We cannot celebrate it, though you have graduated. Father is ill like that, and so is the Son of Heaven. We should have invited our guests as soon as you came back."

I returned home on the fifth (or the sixth perhaps) of July. It was about a week after that day that my parents began to talk about inviting our neighbours. And the day fixed for the dinner was more than a week later than that. Thanks to the country life which was not bound by time, I was, as it were, rescued from the disagreeable entertainment. But my mother, who never understood me, never dreamed that I took it like that.

When the news of the Emperor's death reached us, my father, with the newspaper in his hands, sighed, "O dear, the Son of Heaven at last has died. I, too—" But he stopped, and did not say any more.

I went to the neighbouring town to buy some thin black material. I covered the ball with it, and tied a streamer three inches wide to the top of the flagstaff. Then I raised the flag at half mast at the

gate. The flag, together with the black streamer, hung down in the quiet air. The old gate of our house was roofed with straw. Exposed to the wind and rain, the colour of the straw had changed to light gray, and even its roughness could not escape our eyes. I went out of the gate alone, and gazed at the black cloth, and the red rising sun on the white muslin against the old straw roof. I remembered what the *sensei* had asked me once, "What does your house look like? I wonder if it is much different from the houses in my native town?" I longed to show him this old house in which I was born, but at the same time I hesitated to do it.

Then I walked into the house alone. I came to my desk, and as I read the newspaper, tried to imagine the atmosphere of far-away Tokyo. The centre of my imagination was a picture of the greatest city in Japan which had just lost its father and was moving in a cloud of black. In the midst of the city, bustling and uneasy yet obliged to activity even though in mourning, I saw the *sensei's* house, as if it represented the only light in that dark city. I did not know that this light was also caught up in a noiseless whirlpool. I had not the faintest idea that this light, too, was destined to go out in the near future.

I took up my pen, to write to him about this event. But scarcely had I written ten lines when I gave it up. I tore the paper into pieces and threw them into a wastepaper basket. (Because I thought it useless to write such things to him, besides my

experience told me that he might never answer me.) I was lonely. So I wrote letters, and longed for their answers.

6

I heard from a friend of mine in the middle of August. He informed me that there was a position vacant as a teacher in a country middle school. He was one of those who, urged by economic needs, was looking for such a position. This vacancy indeed he had secured for himself, but finding a better one in the meantime in another prefecture, he took the trouble to advise me to pick up the grain he had dropped. I declined at once, adding that he had better give it to those who were striving after such positions.

After I had posted my answer, I told my parents of it. They both agreed.

"I suppose you can find a better one. You should not go to such a school as that."

Their sayings made me feel that they cherished a sentimental hope for my future. My careless parents seemed to be looking forward to a position and salary entirely unsuited to the inexperience of one who had just graduated.

"But it is very difficult nowadays to find such a position as you expect. In particular my brother and I are different in our studies and in the ages in which we were born; so I hope you won't expect me to do as he did."

"But you have graduated, so you should become independent at least. If people ask me, 'What is your second son doing, after his graduation from the university?' what shall I say? I shall feel quite ashamed if I can't say anything about you."

He frowned. His ideas could not be freed from his native place where he had lived from birth. He, who had been asked by some neighbours how much could one earn when one had graduated from the university, or if one could get about a hundred yen, wanted to get me settled so that he should never be ashamed of his son. To my parents, I, thinking in terms of the spacious Tokyo, was like nothing so much as a queer creature always walking on its head. Indeed, I myself, too, sometimes felt like that. I was silent before my parents, who were so far separated from me that it was impossible to share my ideas with them.

"You had better ask that man you are always speaking of about such a problem as this," my mother said, who could not think of the *sensei* otherwise. But that very *sensei* was the one who had advised me to get my share of my property while my father was able to attend to such matters. He was not the kind of man who would try to find a position for me.

"What is he doing?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing," I replied.

I thought I had told my parents long ago that the *sensei* had no profession, and my father was sure to remember that.

"Not doing anything, why? If he is a man worthy of your admiration, he must be doing something," he said, intending to teach me indirectly. In his opinion, all able men in the world were working; and he seemed to have concluded that the sensei was idle because he was good-for-nothing.

"Even a man like me is not always idle, though I don't get any salary," he said, but I was still silent.

"If he is such a splendid man as you say, he will be sure to find some position for you. Did you ask him?" my mother said.

"No, not yet," I replied.

"You are hopeless. Why haven't you asked him? You had better write to him."

"Yes, I will."

I gave a vague answer, and left them.

7

My father was apparently afraid of his illness. But he was not the kind of man that annoys the doctors with tiresome questions whenever they appear. The doctor, too, hesitated to tell him anything about himself.

He seemed to be imagining what would come after his death. At least the picture of his house after he left it seemed to be occupying his mind.

"It is doubtful whether it is a good thing to make our children study. When they finally finish at school, they never come back. It is as if we sent

our children to school to separate them from us."

As the result of his learning, my brother lived far from home. Unfortunately I had also had the same kind of education; consequently, I, too, had made up my mind to live in Tokyo. My father, having brought up such sons, complained not unreasonably about it. He must have felt really isolated as he drew a picture of my mother who would probably be left alone in the old country house.

He firmly believed that his own house was an establishment which could never be removed; and it never seemed to occur to him that my mother could live anywhere but in this selfsame house. It made him extremely uneasy to leave this solitary woman in the empty house, yet he continued to urge me to find a good position in Tokyo. This contradiction seemed ridiculous, but at the same time I was glad to be able to return to Tokyo thanks to this idea of his.

I had to practise a little deception, making my parents believe that I was doing my best to find a position. I wrote to the *sensei*, describing the minute circumstances of my home, and I asked him if he could find something for me to do, adding that anything would do, if it were within my ability. I wrote this, thinking that he would never take it seriously, or if he did, the unsociable *sensei* could not do anything for me. But I thought he would surely answer me.

Before I sealed it, I said to my mother, "I wrote

to the *sensei*, as you suggested. Here is the letter. Will you read it?" My mother, as I expected, did not read it.

"O have you done it? Then post it as soon as you can. You should have written long ago, and not waited for me to remind you."

To my mother I still seemed a boy. I, too, really felt as if I were very young and inexperienced.

"But I shall never be able to succeed by correspondence alone. Anyway, it will not be until I go up to Tokyo in September that I shall be settled."

"Perhaps. But a very good position might appear suddenly. No one is sure about that. So it is best to begin to try and find it as early as possible."

"Yes, at any rate, he will surely answer me. Then I will tell you." I believed he would be careful about a thing like this. I waited for his letter. But contrary to my expectation, a week passed without bringing me any news from him.

"Perhaps he has gone away to a summer resort."

I had to utter such explanatory words before my mother. These words were not only intended for my mother, but for myself. I felt uneasy when I could not find any explanation for his behaviour in some way.

Sometimes I forgot my father's illness. I thought I should go up to town earlier than I had planned. Sometimes my father, too, forgot his own condition himself. He was anxious about the future, but he did not take steps to provide for it at all. So I could

not seize any opportunity of following the *sensei's* advice and asking him about sharing his property.

8

Finally, in the beginning of September, I decided to go to Tokyo again. I asked my father if he would continue my allowance for a short time as he had done in the past.

"I could never get a position such as you want by spending my days here."

I spoke to him as if I was going to Tokyo to find a place which would satisfy his expectations.

"Of course I ask your support only for a short while, till I am settled," I added. I felt that that position would never be found. But my father, who was ignorant of the state of affairs, adhered to his belief that it would.

"O yes, it will be only a short time, so I shall manage somehow to supply you. But you must not expect it indefinitely. You must become independent as soon as you get some position. Really, you ought never to depend on others from the moment of your graduation. Young people nowadays only know how to spend money, but they never seem to think how to earn it."

He gave me many other kinds of admonition, among which there were words like this, "Formerly the parents were fed by the children, but now they are eaten by the children." I listened in silence.

His advice being over, I was about to leave my seat quietly, when he asked me when I was going. To me the sooner the better.

"Ask your mother to look up the almanac."

"Yes."

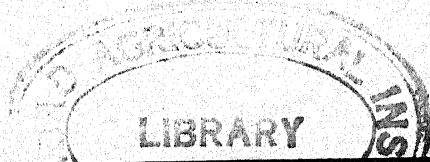
I was then quite docile before my father. I tried to leave my native place with as little opposition to him as possible. My father detained me.

"After you go away, my house will become lonely again. Anyway, it is only your mother and I who will remain here. We shall not feel it if I am quite well, but as it is, no one knows when and in what manner the danger may come."

I consoled my father as best I could, and returned to my desk. I sat among the books scattered about, and thought over and over again of my helpless father and his words, when I heard the cicadas once more. This refrain was made by the *tsuku-tsuku-boshi*¹ and was quite different from what I had heard a few days before. At home in summer I often became strangely sad when I sat still amidst the cicadas which were buzzing as if boiling in the heat. This sorrow seemed to penetrate into the depth of my heart with their violent music. When I felt like that, I always sat still, and looked into my inward being.

That melancholy mood of mine had gradually changed its tone since I returned home. As the

¹ A kind of cicada which begins singing in the end of summer.



*aburazemi*¹ had gone, and the *tsuku-tsuku-boshi* had come, what was destined to happen to those who were around me seemed to reveal itself little by little in the huge mutable world. Revolving in my mind my father's words and the image of his lonely figure rising over and over again, I thought of the *sensei* who had not answered my letter. He and my father, because of the entirely opposite impressions they made upon me, came naturally to my mind at the same moment, by way of comparison and association.

I knew my father almost perfectly. If I were to be separated from him, all I felt about it was the regret and sorrow of a son parting from his father for ever. But I knew very little about the *sensei*. I had had no opportunity of hearing about his past which he had promised to impart to me. In a word, the *sensei* was an obscure existence for me. I felt I could never be satisfied unless I got out of that obscurity and reached the stage of perfect understanding. It was the greatest pain for me to give up our friendship. I asked my mother to look up the almanac, and fixed the day for my departure.

9

When I was about to leave home (I am sure it was two or three days before my intended departure), my father suddenly fainted for the second

¹ A kind of cicada which sings in the heat of summer.

time. I was fastening my basket-trunk in which my clothes and books had been packed. My father had just gone to take a bath, and my mother, who went into the bathroom to wash his back, called me in a loud voice; I saw her supporting him by his bare back. But when we brought him back into the parlour, he said he was all right. It was at nine that I took a hasty supper; until then I had been sitting close to his pillow, cooling his forehead with a wet towel by way of precaution.

The next day, he felt better than we had expected, and insisted upon doing everything for himself.

"O I am all right now," he repeated what he had said to me when he had fainted last winter. At that time it had been all right as he had said. So I felt he might repeat that state again. But the doctor only remarked that we could never be too careful. He did not explain his condition clearly even though I asked him. My anxiety made me unwilling to start for Tokyo on the fixed day.

"Shall I put it off, till we are sure that he is all right?" I asked my mother.

"Yes, do," she begged.

She was more disquieted and anxious about him now than was necessary, though she had been indifferent to his condition while she saw him going into the garden or the back yard in high spirits.

"Didn't you decide to go up to Tokyo today?" my father asked.

"Yes, but I put it off for a few days," I replied.

"For my sake?" he asked in reply.

I hesitated for a moment. If I said yes, it would have implied that he was seriously ill. I did not want to make him nervous. But he seemed to have seen through my mind.

"O I am sorry," he said, and looked toward the garden.

I came to my room, and looked at the basket-trunk there. It was bound fast, so that it could be born out at any time. I absent-mindedly stood in front of it, and wondered if I should unpack it again.

In that state of restlessness, in which we seemed to be sitting down but trying to stand up again, three or four days passed. Then my father fainted again. The doctor ordered him to keep to his bed with the utmost quiet.

"What shall we do?" my mother said, in a very low voice so that it might not reach my father's ears. Her expression was extremely helpless. I got ready to wire my brother and sister. But my father in bed had little pain. When I saw him talking, he looked quite the same as when he had caught cold. Besides he had more appetite than usual, and he would not easily obey our warnings.

"Ah, I am going to die soon, so I must eat something delicious first."

To me his words sounded both comic and tragic; for he did not live in the town where we could get plenty of dainties. In the evening, he

asked my mother to bake some dried rice-cakes and he munched them.

"I wonder why he is so ravenous. Perhaps there is some strength in his bone." My mother put her hope in the very thing which should have discouraged us. And yet she uttered the old-fashioned word ravenous that was used only of sick people hungry for everything.

When my uncle came to see him, my father did not wish him to go, chiefly because of his loneliness, but partly because he wished to complain about our not allowing him to eat as much as he liked.

10

For more than a week he remained about the same. During those days I wrote a long letter to my brother in Kyushu, asking my mother to write to my sister. I felt that these letters might be the last ones describing my father's condition. I added that they should come as soon as they received my telegrams, which I intended to send them in case of emergency.

My brother's profession made him very busy. My sister was expecting a baby. Neither of them, therefore, was at liberty to come home unless our father were in real danger. Yet I should be sorry if when they finally managed to come it were too late. The responsibility, which rested solely on me, weighed heavily upon my mind, as I did not know

the right time to wire them.

"Even I can't tell exactly. But you must be prepared at any moment," said the doctor who came from the town where there was a railway station. I consulted my mother, and we decided to engage a nurse from the hospital in the town. My father, seeing a woman in white salute him near his pillow, looked rather queer.

My father had long realized that he had been suffering from a fatal disease. Yet he was not aware of the approach of death itself.

"I shall visit Tokyo again when I have recovered. We don't know when we are going to die. So it is best to do what we want while we are still alive." My mother, not knowing what to say to him, chimed in, "When you go to Tokyo, please take me with you."

But sometimes he made the appeal of extreme loneliness, saying, "If I die, please take good care of your mother."

I had a sort of remembrance of these words, "if I die." It was on the evening of my graduation that the *sensei* had repeated them to his wife over and over again. I remembered the *sensei*'s smiling face and his wife's figure, covering her ears with her hands, "What an ominous joke!" At that time, "If I die" was simply a supposition. But what I heard now was a fact which was threatening us every moment. I could not imitate her reply to the *sensei*, but I had to divert him, even though it was only with idle words.

"Don't talk like that. You are going to visit Tokyo when you get well and strong, and Mother is going with you. You will certainly be astonished, because everything is so changed in Tokyo. There are many new tram-ways, and because of this, the streets are improving very much. Besides, the city-reorganization has been begun. We can almost say there is not a minute in the twenty-four hours when Tokyo is not astir."

Not knowing how to divert him, I told him even unnecessary things. But my father listened contentedly.

As the natural outcome of his illness, our house was thronged with people. The relatives in the neighbourhood, at the rate of one in two days, came to inquire after the patient. Among them were those who lived comparatively far and did not usually visit us often. "I think he is all right. He is better than I expected. First of all, he can talk freely, and his face has not become thinner at all," said one of those visitors when he left us. The household, almost too quiet and hushed weeks before when I returned, was becoming more active.

My father's illness was the only thing that stood still, or if it moved it was only toward a worse state. I consulted my mother and uncle, and wired my brother and sister at last. My brother wired that he would come at once. My sister's husband, too, informed us that he was coming. He had written to us that he was advising my sister, who had mis-

carried last time, to take good care so as not to repeat it again; he might be coming to see my father in place of her.

11

Amidst this restlessness, I had time to sit quietly at my desk. Sometimes I had even the leisure to open a book and read about ten pages without being interrupted. My basket-trunk, which had been bound fast, had been unpacked, I knew not when. I took various things out, as I needed them. I thought of my programme for the summer which I had made just before I left Tokyo. What I had actually done did not amount even to one third of what I had intended. I repeatedly suffered this kind of disappointment over and over again. But I had never spent such a fruitless summer as this. I tried to think that life was always like this, yet I was crushed by unpleasant feelings.

As I sat in this disappointment, I considered my father's illness. I wondered about the future when he would leave us. At the same time, I thought of the *sensei*. At the two opposite ends of my discomfort, I saw the figures of those two who were entirely different in social position, education, and character.

One day when I had left my father's bedroom and was sitting among my scattered books, crossing my arms, my mother appeared, and said, "You had

better take a nice little nap sometimes. You must be very tired." She did not know how I felt. I, too, was not so childish as to expect her to understand me. I simply thanked her. But she remained standing on the threshold of my room.

"How is Father?" I asked.

"He is fast asleep now," she replied.

Suddenly she came into my room, sat down beside me, and asked, "Have you not heard from the *sensei*?"

She firmly believed what I had said before. At that time, I assured her that he would answer, though I had no expectation at all of receiving the kind of letter which would satisfy my parents. It was as if I had deceived her, when everything had been clear to me.

"Write to him again, will you?" she said.

I could not complain of the trouble of writing useless letters if that would comfort her. But it was painful to me to press the *sensei* with such a matter as this. I was far more afraid of being despised by him than of displeasing my mother or even my father. I even had a secret fear that he had not answered because of this contempt.

"It is easy for me to write to him, but it won't do to rely on letters alone, especially about a thing like this. I should go up to Tokyo, and ask him and others in person."

"But with your father like this, how can you go to Tokyo? We don't know when you can."

"Of course, I shall not go. I will stay here, as long as his condition is uncertain."

"Yes, surely. How could we go selfishly to Tokyo, leaving your father seriously ill?"

At first I pitied my mother who was quite ignorant about my affairs. But I could not understand why she wanted to talk about such a thing in this upset. I wondered if there was still some room left in her mind to think of other things forgetting the sick husband before her, just as I had leisure to sit quietly and read in spite of his illness.

But then she began, "To tell you the truth, I think how comforted your father will be if you are settled while he is still alive. I am afraid it will be too late, judging from his condition now. Yet he still talks well, and understands well, so I want you to set his heart at ease while he is still like this. Won't you be a good son to him?"

Poor me! I could not become an obedient son, and I did not write a word to the *sensei*.

12

When my brother came back, my father was reading a newspaper in his bed. He used to look at the newspapers before anything else. After he kept to his bed, he wanted more and more to mitigate his boredom by those newspapers. My mother, instead of stopping him, tried to leave him alone as much as possible.

"I am very glad you are well enough to read the newspaper. I expected you were worse, but you look very well."

So saying, my brother talked with my father. But his too lively tone seemed out of keeping with the real situation. But when he and I were alone, my brother was more serious and sad.

"You should not let him read a newspaper."

"Yes, I quite agree with you. But he insists upon it, and we cannot stop him."

He listened to my apology in silence, then said, "But can he understand it well?" He seemed to have perceived that my father's understanding had become duller through his illness.

"O yes, to be sure. Just a little while ago, I sat close to his pillow and talked with him about twenty minutes, but I found nothing out of tune about him. To judge by his condition, I think he may live for many days," said my sister's husband, who arrived almost at the same time as my brother. His opinion was far more optimistic than ours. My father was asking him many things about my sister, saying, "She had much better not be disturbed by an unnecessary journey. If she takes a risk, and comes to see me, I shall feel very uneasy." Again he said, "It is a long time since I saw her. So if I become well again, I shall go to see her myself, to see the baby. It is not necessary for her to come here."

My father was the first to read of General No-

gi's death, and said, "Good heavens, good heavens!" We, who did not know anything about this event, were surprised at this sudden exclamation.

"I felt as if a dagger were pointed at my heart when I heard that exclamation. I thought that he had finally lost his reason," was what my brother said afterward. "Yes, I was really frightened, too," my brother-in-law agreed.

Indeed in everyday's newspaper in those days there were plenty of things about which country-people like us were eager to hear. I sat close to my father's pillow, and read it carefully. When I had no time to read it in his room, I secretly took it into my room and read it all. I could not forget for a long time General Nogi's figure in his uniform and his wife's dressed like an ancient court-lady.

When the sad wind was blowing into our corner of the country, shaking the half-sleeping trees and grass, I received a sudden telegram from the sensei. In the village where a dog would bark at a man in foreign clothes, even a telegram was a great event. My mother, who had received it, was very impressed and took the trouble to call me into a place where nobody was present.

"What is this about?" She stood beside me, waiting for me to open it. The telegram asked me to go to Tokyo to see him. I mused with my head bent on one side.

"I am sure it is about your position," was my mother's opinion.

I thought perhaps it might be so. But it hardly seemed possible. At any rate, it was impossible for me, having asked my brother and brother-in-law to come, to leave my sick father and go to Tokyo. I consulted my mother, and decided to wire him that I could not go. In a sentence as simple as possible, I wrote that my father was seriously ill. But finding this unsatisfactory, I added another sentence stating that I would explain everything in a letter, and on the same day, I posted the letter describing my circumstances minutely. My mother, who firmly believed that it was about nothing but my position, seemed deeply distressed, and said, "Oh, we are unlucky!"

13

The letter I wrote was a fairly long one. Both my mother and I believed that he would surely answer this letter. Then two days after I had written to him, another telegram came to me, simply stating that he could manage without me. I showed it to my mother.

"Perhaps he is intending to write to you about it."

My mother seemed to have no other thought than that he was endeavouring to find a position for me. Perhaps she was right, but I could not believe it, judging from his everyday life. It seemed utterly impossible to think that the *sensei* could find me a position.

"At any rate, I am sure he has not received my letter yet. So he must have wired this before seeing it," I said to my mother. My mother, deep in thought, agreed with me gravely, well knowing that that fact was of no use in understanding the *sensei*.

On that day the doctor in charge was to come and see my father with the head physician of the hospital in the town. So neither my mother nor I had the opportunity to talk about anything else. The two doctors held a consultation over the patient, and returned after finishing a rectal injection.

Since my father was ordered rest, he was obliged to ask others to do everything for him. Fastidious as he was, he hated this kind of life at first, but as his limbs were not at his command, he was forced to remain quietly in bed. But as the days went on, because of his understanding having become duller through his illness or through some other reason, he began to perform various natural functions unconsciously. Sometimes the bed-clothes and sheets were stained, but he did not seem to mind, though it disturbed us. Owing to his illness, the quantity of his urine became very small, which caused the doctor some anxiety. His appetite gradually became poorer. Sometimes he wanted something to eat, but only his tongue wanted it; his stomach could accept very little. He had no more energy to take up the newspaper that he had loved to read, his spectacles beside his pillow always remained in their black case. When Saku San, with whom my father had been

quite intimate since childhood, and who lived about two miles away, came to see him, my father, casting glassy eyes toward him, said, "O you, Saku San," and, "It is very kind of you to come, Saku San. You look very well, and I envy you. I am dying."

"O no, you are more fortunate than I. Your two sons have graduated from the university. It is nothing to be ill for a little. Look at me. My wife died, and I have no child. The only thing about me is that I am living. And though I am well, I have no comfort, nor pleasure. Don't you see?"

It was two or three days after Saku San's visit that he had the rectal injection. He was glad to feel more comfortable after that. He seemed to have gained some hope for his life, and looked merrier. My mother, encouraged by his condition, or wanting to cheer him up, told him about the *sensei's* telegram, as if I had found a position that would satisfy his hope in Tokyo. I, who happened to be there, felt some itch in my conscience but listened to her in silence, as I could not interrupt her. My father looked happy.

"O I am glad to hear that," my sister's husband said.

"Don't you know what kind of position it is yet?" my brother asked.

I lost the courage to deny it then. I deliberately left the room, mumbling a vague answer which even I could not make out.

14

My father's illness seemed to have reached the stage when only the last blow was wanting to finish him, and its advance was only arrested for a while. Every night, all the household went to bed, threatened by the expectation that the sentence of Destiny might come upon him during the night.

My father had not enough pain in any part of his body to make us unhappy. From that standpoint, to nurse him was quite an easy task. For caution's sake, one of us sat beside his bed every night in turn, but the rest could retire at the ordinary bed-time. One night when I could not sleep, I seemed to hear my father groan. I got out of my bed in that midnight, and went to his bedside to make sure. That night it was my mother's turn to keep vigil. But with her bent arm as her pillow, she was fast asleep beside him. My father, too, like a man softly lulled into a deep sleep, was quiet. I walked out of the room on tiptoe, and returned to my bed.

I slept under the same mosquito-curtain as my brother. My sister's husband alone, because of his being treated as a guest, rested in a room far apart from ours.

"I am sorry that Seki San has to stay so many days."

Seki was my brother-in-law's surname.

"But probably he is not too busy to stay a

little while with us. But it is you who must be disturbed. It is so many days since you returned."

"But I cannot help that. This is different from anything else, you know."

Lying beside him, I talked with him like this. Both my brother and I felt that my father could never recover again. The thought, "He is going to die sooner or later," lay in our minds. We, as sons, were, as it were, waiting for our father's death. But we hesitated to express that in words. Yet we perfectly understood each other's thought.

"Father seems to be expecting to get well again," my brother said to me.

In fact, there was something about him which made us feel like that. When our neighbours came to inquire after him, he insisted on seeing them. Whenever he met them, he expressed his regret that he could not invite them to our dinner celebrating my graduation, and sometimes he added that he would surely invite them when he became well again.

"Oh, I am glad to hear that you have escaped that celebration dinner. When mine took place, I was quite tortured," said my brother, and reminded me of that past. I smiled bitterly, remembering the unpleasant scene resulting from too much alcoholic drink. I saw again my father's embarrassing manner, as he walked about the room pressing the guests to eat and drink.

We had not been intimate as brothers. When

we were little, we often quarrelled, and being younger, it was always my part to cry. Our special subjects in the university grew solely out of the difference in our characters. After entering the university, and especially since I knew the *sensei*, when I considered my brother thence, I had always thought him brutish. I had not seen him for a long time, and he lived quite far away, so speaking from both time and distance, he was always not near to me. But when we met after a long time, the fraternal tenderness sprang up naturally from I knew not where. The greatest cause for it was that we were facing one of the greatest events of our lives. My brother and I shook hands close to the pillow of one, who was our father, and who was dying.

"What are you going to do?" he asked. I questioned him in return about a different matter.

"I wonder how Father has been managing his property."

"O I don't know. Father doesn't say anything about it yet. You call it property, but, as for money, it is not much, I think."

My mother, in her turn, was anxious about the *sensei*'s letter.

"Haven't you received his letter?" she kept asking me.

"Who on earth is the *sensei*?" my brother asked.

"Haven't I told you about him just recently?" I asked, displeased at my brother's forgetting so easily about the affairs of others, when he himself had taken the trouble to ask for the information.

"O yes, I think I remember."

He said he could not understand after all. In my opinion, there was no necessity to try to make him understand the *sensei*, but I was mortified. I felt that this was a glimmer of his old nature.

My brother's opinion was that since I admired the *sensei*, he must be a man quite well known. He seemed to think that the *sensei* might be at least one of the professors in the university. Of what use was a man who had no name, who was not doing anything? In this respect, his idea was the same as my father's. But while the latter judged rashly that the *sensei* was doing nothing because he had no ability, the former suggested that those who wasted their time in spite of their ability must be worthless. He said, "I don't like an egoist. Because it is selfish to live on without doing something definite. We ought to work to the best of our ability."

I wanted to ask him if he knew the meaning of the word egoist that he seemed to use so freely. Then he added, "Anyhow, I am very glad he can find a position for you. It seems to make Father happy, doesn't it?"

As long as I received no letter of explanation from the *sensei*, I could not believe this, but I lacked the courage to express any doubt. Now that my

mother, from her hasty conclusion, had announced it to all the members of my family, I could not astonish them by my sudden denial. Even though I had not been urged by my mother, I would have waited for the *sensei*'s letter. I prayed that the letter might contain something about my position as everybody else expected it. In front of my father who was dying, of my mother who was eager to ease his mind, of my brother who did not regard one as a human being unless one worked, of my sister's husband and my uncles and aunts, I had to worry myself about the thing that I did not at all care about.

When my father felt sick, and I saw that yellow liquid coming out of his mouth, I remembered the danger against which the *sensei* and his wife had warned me once. Looking at my mother, who said, "It is natural that his stomach should be upset. He has been in bed such a long time," tears stood in my eyes at her ignorance.

When my brother and I met in the sitting-room, he said, "Did you hear that?" He meant whether I had heard what the doctor had said when he left. I knew this perfectly well, though I received no explanation.

"Don't you want to leave Tokyo and take care of our household?" he said, turning his face toward me. I was silent. "Mother, when left alone, can do nothing, can she?" he said again. He did not seem to think that there was anything to be pitied about my growing old in these rural surroundings

with only the smell of the earth in my nostrils.

"You can read as much as you want in the country. Besides, there is no necessity for you to work. Wouldn't it suit you?"

"Properly speaking, it is you who should come back," I replied.

"How can I do such a thing?" he rejected it at once. His mind was filled with the desire to do something in the world.

"If you don't like it, we must ask Uncle to help us. But I think either you or I must take care of Mother."

"It is very doubtful whether Mother would leave this house or not."

Thus we, two brothers, talked about what was to be done after our father's death, even while he was still alive.

16

My father began to talk in delirium.

"I am very sorry, General Nogi. Indeed, I am ashamed of myself. Yes, I will go after you at once."

Often he spoke like this. My mother was horrified, and wanted us all to sit beside him as much as possible. My father, who expressed his loneliness when he was himself, seemed to like it too. Especially when he looked around the room and could not find my mother's figure, he was sure to ask, "Where is Omitsu?" Even when he did not say so, his eyes spoke that for him. I often

went out of the room to fetch my mother. When she left her work and came to him, saying, "Is there something you want me to do?" he sometimes said nothing, but only gazed at her. But sometimes he said something quite unexpected to her. Or, he surprised us by saying something very tender to her, "Omitsu, you have taken care of me so kindly." My mother's eyes always swam with tears at those words of his, and she always remembered my father when he was young and strong and compared him with this feeble, gentle, old man. "Now he talks like this, but before he was very hard and cruel." She added that he had once struck her on the back with a broom. My brother and I, who had heard that story over and over again, listened to her in quite a different mood, as if she were telling us a reminiscence of a dead man.

My father, looking at the black shadow of death before him, had not referred to his will yet.

"Ought we not to ask him while he can still understand?" my brother said, looking at me.

"I wonder," I replied. I thought that it might not be good for my father to be asked such a thing if he did not volunteer the information. We, undecided, finally consulted our uncle. He, too, bent his head thoughtfully.

"But if there is anything that he wants to say to us, it would be a pity for him to die with it still on his mind. But I wonder whether we should not ask him first."

We did not reach any decision about this matter. Then he sank into a comatose state. My mother, who, as usual, was ignorant of his condition, was glad, mistaking it for an ordinary sleep. She said, "What a relief it is for us that he can sleep quietly like this."

Sometimes my father opened his eyes and suddenly asked us what So-and-so was doing. The name of the one that he inquired about was always one of those who had just been sitting near him. It seemed that the dark spot and the light one grew in his consciousness, and the latter, like a white thread stitching together the dusk, only continued its existence at some interval. It was natural for my mother to mistake that unconsciousness for an ordinary sleep.

Then his tongue gradually lost its freedom. Though he sometimes tried to say something, it was often that we could not reach any conclusion, owing to the obscure ending of what he said. Yet, when he opened his mouth, his voice was so strong that no one could believe it belonged to a man who was so seriously ill. As for us, we had to speak in a far louder voice than usual, and with our mouths as close to his ears as possible.

"Is it comfortable to cool your head?"

"Yes."

With the aid of the nurse, I changed the water-pillow, and put an ice-bag full of newly-chopped ice on his head. As I was gently pressing the sharp

pieces of ice flat against his bald forehead, my brother, coming from the corridor, silently handed me a letter. I took it with my unoccupied left hand and began at once to wonder.

It was much heavier than the usual letter. It was not even in an ordinary envelope. It was too long for that. It was covered with a sheet of Japanese paper, and sealed carefully with paste. As I received it from my brother, I at once marked that it was registered. I found the *sensei*'s name in carefully written characters on the back. Occupied as I was, I could not open it, and thrust it into my bosom.

17

On that day, my father's condition seemed to be exceedingly bad. When I left him for a moment, my brother, whom I passed in the corridor, said in a tone like a guard's, "Where are you going?" and warned me to sit beside my father as much as possible, for his condition was quite critical. I thought that too. So I returned to his room without attempting to read the letter in my bosom. My father, opening his eyes, asked my mother the names of those who sat there. When she told him one by one, he nodded at each name. When he did not nod, she, in a louder voice, repeated, "This is So-and-so. Do you understand?"

"I have been troubling you all so much," he

said. Then he fell into a stupor. For a while, those who sat around his bed gazed at him in silence. Then one got up and went into the next room. Still another left. Finally, as the third, I went out and entered my room. I wanted to open the letter which I had thrust into my bosom a little while before. I could do that easily enough even beside my father's bed. But it was so bulky that it was impossible to read it through there. I stole some minutes which I hoped to be able to devote to this task.

I tore the strong-fibred wrapping paper, almost scratching at it. Then appeared something like a manuscript finely written on lined paper folded in four for the convenience of packing. I turned back these sheets of foreign paper to make them even, so that I could read more easily.

I was surprised at this great quantity of paper and ink, and wondered what they were going to convey to me. At the same time, I felt anxious about my father. I was sure that something would happen to him before I finished this letter, or at least I was certain to be called by my brother, my mother, or my uncle. I could not read the letter with a calm mind. Quite restless, I only read the first page, which was as follows.

"When you asked me to explain my past, I had not courage enough to satisfy you. But now, I believe I have won the freedom to explain it clearly to you. But that freedom is but a worldly one,

which will be lost if I wait for your return to Tokyo. So, if I do not avail myself of this freedom while I can, I shall lose for ever the opportunity to pour my past into your ears as indirect experience for you. If so, my words, so firmly promised to you, will become entirely a lie. I made up my mind to use my pen, instead of my mouth, because I could not help it."

Reading thus much, I could clearly understand the reason why he had written such a long letter. From the beginning, I believed that he would never write to me about the way of earning my daily bread. But why was the *sensei*, who did not like to take up his pen, persuaded to reveal his past in such a long letter? Why could he not wait for me to come up to Tokyo?

"I will tell you because the freedom for it came to me. But that freedom must be lost for ever before long."

Repeating these words over and over again, I racked my brain to understand their meaning. Then suddenly I was seized with uneasiness. I tried to read more, when my brother called out to me from the direction of my father's room. I stood up, frightened again. I ran through the corridor and went into the room. I realized that my father's last moment had finally come.

While I was away, the doctor had arrived and

was in my father's room. He was going to give my father a rectal injection again, to make him comfortable. Resting after last night's fatigue, the nurse was asleep in the other room, and my brother, who was not used to such things, went about the room, not knowing what to do. As he saw me, he sat down, saying, "Come and help us." I put an oiled paper under my father's body, helping the doctor in place of my brother.

My father became a little better. The doctor, having inspected the result of the rectal injection, left us, after sitting close to his pillow about half an hour. As he left, he said he would come again, adding that we should send for him anytime if anything happened to my father.

I left the room where every moment was threatened with danger and tried to read the *sensei's* letter again. But I could not feel the slightest composure. Scarcely had I sat at my desk than I fancied that my brother was about to call me. I thought that when I was called for the second time it would be surely my father's last moment. This terrible anticipation made my hands tremble. I turned over the pages of the letter mechanically. My eyes saw orderly rows of letters written within the lines. But they could not catch any meaning from them. There was hardly room enough in my mind even to pick up some words or sentences now and then. I turned the pages one by one till I came to the last page, and I was going to put the letter on my desk, folding

it in its original creases, when my eye caught a sentence near the end. "By the time this letter reaches you, I shall no longer be in this world, I shall be dead."

I was struck. I felt my bosom, which had been restless till then, freeze all at once. I turned over the pages again beginning with the last page, and read on inversely at the rate of one sentence to each page. Attempting to find out what I ought to know in a few minutes, I tried to pierce the dancing words with my eyes. All I wanted to know then was the question of whether he was alive or not. His past—his dusky past that he promised to impart to me was quite unnecessary for me. Turning over the pages inversely from end to beginning, I impatiently folded the long letter which would not give me the information that I needed.

I went to the threshold of my father's room to see his condition. It was unexpectedly quiet about his bed. I waved my hand to my mother who sat there with a helpless, tired face, and asked, "How is Father?" She replied, "He seems to be a little better now." I put my face just before his eyes, and asked, "How are you? Do you feel a little better after the rectal injection?" He nodded, and said distinctly, "Thank you." His mind was not so vague as we expected.

I left him again, and returned to my room. I examined the time-table, at the same time looking at my watch. Suddenly I stood up, tidied my obi,

and threw the *sensei's* letter into my sleeve. Then I went out from the kitchen door. I ran to the doctor's house with all my might. I wanted him to give his opinion clearly whether my father would live two or three days more. I wanted to ask him to maintain my father's life by every means. Unfortunately, the doctor was not at home. I had no time to wait for his return, nor composure to sit still in his room. I at once got into a rickshaw, and hurried to the station.

Putting a piece of paper against the wall of the station, I wrote a pencilled note to my mother and brother. It was quite a simple one, but I thought it better than to run away without any explanation, and asked the rickshaw-man to take it to my home. Then, making up my mind, I jumped into the train for Tokyo. In the rumbling third-class carriage, I took the *sensei's* letter out of my sleeve again, and at last read it through.

PART III
THE SENSEI AND HIS LAST LETTER

1

DURING the summer, I received two or three letters from you. I am sure it was in the second letter that you asked me to find a suitable position for you in Tokyo. When I read it, I wanted to do something for you. At least, I felt I ought to answer your letter. But I must own that I did not even try to find anything for you. As you know, it is truer to describe me as living quite alone in this world, than as having few friends, and so it is utterly impossible for a man like me even to attempt to find a position. But that is not the real point. To tell you the truth, I was too deeply absorbed in myself, and my future. Should I continue my existence which is like that of a lifeless mummy left behind among human beings, or—? In those days, I shivered whenever I repeated this 'or' in my mind, like a man who came running to the edge of a precipice and suddenly looked down into the unfathomable depth. I was a coward. I was tortured to the same extent that all other cowards have been. I must own without exaggeration that I was scarcely aware of your existence. Further, the question of your position, as a means of earning your daily bread,

seemed like nonsense to me, of not the slightest importance. I was pressed by a thing far more important to me. With your letter still in the letter-holder, I continued to sink deeper into myself, with my arms crossed. A man, whose family is fairly well-to-do, seeking for a position as soon as he finishes school! Thus bitterly I sometimes thought of you far away. I make this confession only to show you how I regret not having written to you. I have no intention of being rude only to anger you. I am sure you will understand me if you read this letter. At any rate, as I have been silent when I ought not to, I want to beg your pardon for the omission.

Afterwards, I wired you. To tell you the truth, I just wanted to see you, and to tell you my past as you once asked me to do. When you wired me stating that you could not come up to Tokyo then, I gazed at that telegram for a long time in disappointment. You, seeming not to have been satisfied with the telegram, sent me a long letter, so that I could perfectly understand the circumstances that detained you at home. It would be impossible to regard you as discourteous. How could you leave your home, when your dear father was seriously ill? It was my selfishness in forgetting all about his illness that was to blame.—Indeed, I had forgotten your father when I sent you that telegram, though it was I who had always advised you to take good care of him, explaining that his illness was a serious one. Such is my inconsistency. Perhaps this contradictory character

is due to my past which constantly oppresses me, and not to my natural perversity. Forgive my selfishness, for I myself am well aware of it.

When I read your letter—the last letter that you wrote to me, I felt I had done you a wrong. I attempted to write an answer, to beg your pardon, but stopped without finishing a single line, because, I knew that if I wrote at all it must be this letter, and it was a little too early for that. That was why I wired you again, simply stating that I could manage without you.

2

J. Sanjeed

Then I began to write this. I was terribly annoyed by my inability to express the events and thoughts as I liked, unaccustomed as I have been to such a task. Sometimes I almost gave up this obligation to you. But though I threw down my pen determined to stop, it was useless. In an hour, I wanted to continue. You may think this due to my sense of duty. I, too, don't deny that. As you know, as I am leading a solitary existence, with hardly any intercourse with the world, there is nothing to be called obligation rooted anywhere in my life, however hard I look around me. I don't know whether I became like this on purpose or by accident, but I have lived, curtailing my obligations as much as possible. But this is not all through indifference to duty, but because of a super-sensitive attitude to-

ward it, which dries up my energy and makes me unable to endure all its stimuli. That is why I decided upon an inactive life. And if I promise at all I am exceedingly disturbed if I do not keep that promise. So I am obliged to take up the pen again, if only to get rid of my sense of unfulfilled obligation.

Besides, I want to write. Apart from the sense of duty, I long to record my past, which I alone possess, because it was experienced only by myself. Then perhaps it is a pity to die without confiding it to another. Somehow, I feel like this. But if I have no one but an unappreciative listener, I think it might be better to bury it with my miserable body. In fact, if you had never existed, my past would never have been shared with another, either directly or indirectly. I want to tell my past to you alone, among all the millions of people born in Japan. Because you are sincere. Because you said that you wanted in earnest to learn a living lesson from life itself.

I am going to cast upon your head the dark shadow of life unreservedly. But don't be afraid. Gaze into the darkness, and grasp whatever will help you. Of course, I refer only to spiritual darkness. I was born with a strong sense of right and wrong. Also I was brought up in a strictly moral way. My ethical ideas might be very different from those of the younger generation. If it is so, anyway they are my own. They are not a borrowed dress hired for a special occasion. So I presume it will be

of some use to you, who are now entering upon maturity.

You may remember that you tried to discuss with me some of the current problems of thought. You know very well the attitude that I took then. I did not think lightly of your opinions, but I could not respect them. There was no background in them, and you were too young to have your experiences. I often laughed, and you often gave me a dissatisfied look, till you pressed me to unfold my past before you as if it were a roll of pictures. It was then that I felt respect for you. Because you unreservedly showed me your resolution to catch something alive from my being, and to sip the warm blood running in my body, by cutting my heart. At that time, I was still living, and did not want to die. So I rejected your request, promising to satisfy you some day. Now I am going to destroy my heart myself, and pour my blood into your veins. I shall be happy if a new life can enter into your bosom, when my heart has stopped beating.

3

I was not twenty when I lost my parents. I remember my wife telling you once that they died from the same illness. Moreover, as my wife intimated, they died in quick succession, one can say almost together. To tell you the truth, my father's illness was that dreadful typhus, which infected my

mother who had nursed him.

I was the only son born to those two. My father had been fairly well-to-do, so I was brought up comfortably. When I think of my past, I feel that if my parents had not died then, or if one of them had survived, I could have kept to this day a generous disposition resulting from that life of comfort.

I was left absolutely alone, in blank helplessness. I had neither knowledge, nor experience. Nor had I proper judgement. When my father died, my mother could not sit beside him. When my mother died, she did not know even about my father's death. I don't know whether she realized it, or whether she really believed that he was better, as she was told. She only asked my uncle to help me after she died. She said, trying to point to me as I sat beside her, "Please take care of my boy." Before their illness, it had been decided that I was to go up to Tokyo, and she seemed to be intending to refer to this. But when she added only "To Tokyo," my uncle said at once, "All right. Don't worry about him." Perhaps she had a constitution strong enough to endure high temperature. My uncle praised her, saying to me, "How firm she has been!" But now I wonder whether it had been her will or not. Of course she knew the dreadful name of my father's illness. She also knew that she had caught it. But I think there is yet room for doubting whether she believed that she was go-

ing to die from this illness. Besides, her words, spoken when she had a high temperature, sometimes did not remain in her mind at all, however clear and reasonable they had been. So— But this is not what I am going to say. Yet my habit of analyzing things of this kind and looking at them from every direction was even then strong. I think I must call your special attention to this at the very beginning of my letter and point out that as an example of this habit such an account as this, which is not important for the main story in question, will be of some use. So please read on, reconsidering it in this way. As this trait affects my judgement of men's behaviour, I think I have come to doubt others' moral sense all the more. It is certain that this quality has positively and strongly worked upon my worries and sufferings, so I want you to bear this in mind.

As my story will become difficult to understand, if I divert from the main line like this, let us go back to it. I fancy that I am writing this long letter in a somewhat calmer mood than that of others who go the same way as I shall go. The sound of trams, which we begin to hear when the world has gone to sleep, has already stopped. Outside the shutters, the poor insects have begun to chirp feebly, in such a tone as reminds us softly of the dewy autumn. My wife, who knows nothing, is enjoying the sleep of the innocent in the next room. When I begin to write, one letter after another is formed, with the

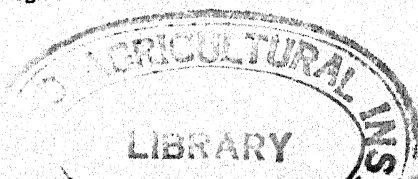
faint sound of my pen. I am sitting in front of my paper in rather a tranquil mood. Perhaps my pen will stray because of my inexperience in using it, but not I think because of my disturbed mind.

4

At any rate, I, left absolutely alone, had nothing to do but rely upon my uncle, as my mother had told me. As for my uncle, he took charge of everything and took care of me, and managed so that I could go up to Tokyo as I had wanted.

I came to Tokyo, and entered the high school. The students of the high school in those days were far more savage and coarse than they are now. One of my acquaintances quarrelled with an artisan at midnight, and hurt his head with *geta*.¹ This student was drunk, and while they were striking at each other with all their might, the artisan snatched his school cap in which his name was clearly written on a diamond-shaped white cloth stuck in the lining. So there was trouble, and the police-station was going to communicate with the school, but his friends, doing all they could for him, succeeded in keeping it from public notice. You, who have been brought up in the refined atmosphere of the present, are sure to regard such violent conduct as this as foolishness. Indeed, I, too, feel quite the same as you. But to

¹ Wooden clogs.



balance that defect those students had a sort of simplicity lacking in the modern students. In those days the money that my uncle gave me every month was far less than the amount that your father sent you. (Of course this was partly owing to the difference in the cost of living.) Yet I did not feel any want. Moreover, among many class-mates, I was never one of those poor students who had to envy others' affluence. I think that rather I belonged to those who were envied by others, because, besides the fixed amount sent by my uncle every month, I could ask him for money for books (I liked to buy books even in those days) and for special expenses, and I could spend as much as I liked.

I, who knew nothing, not only trusted my uncle, but also, as if he had been a rare creature, respected him, always feeling grateful to him. He was an ambitious man. He was once a representative for the prefectural assembly. For that reason perhaps, I remember he had some connection with the political parties. He was my father's younger brother, but his character seems to have developed in quite an opposite direction from my father's. My father was all uprightness, and carefully protected the property that he received from his ancestors. Flower arrangement and tea ceremony were his hobbies. Also he liked to read collections of poetry. He seemed to have a deep interest in pictures and curios. Our house was in the country, but sometimes from the neighbouring city about four miles away—where my

uncle lived—the curio-dealer took the trouble to come and show him some pictures or incense-burners. My father, in a word, could be called a man of means. He was a country gentleman, with considerably refined tastes. So as regards character, he was quite different from his urban brother who was a busy man of affairs. Yet they strongly loved each other. My father often spoke of him as a trustworthy man, far abler than himself. He sometimes remarked that a man like him who inherited property from his parents did not develop his ability, because it was not necessary for him to fight with the world. Both my mother and I heard these words. He seemed to say them as a lesson for me. “You had better remember this,” so saying, he looked at me so deliberately that I have never forgotten it. How could I doubt my uncle, who was trusted and praised by my father like this? Even if my parents had lived he would have been my pride. When I had to ask his help after my parents’ death, he was not merely my pride, but a person necessary to my existence.

5

When I returned to my native place to spend my first summer holidays, my uncle and his wife were living in my house as its new master and mistress. They had promised to do this before I went up to Tokyo, for as long as I, the sole inhabitant of

the house, lived in Tokyo, we could not think of any other way.

In those days my uncle seemed to be connected with various companies in the town. He laughed, saying that it was far more convenient for him to live in his own house in the town than to remove to mine four miles away from the centre of his business. This was when we consulted about what arrangement would be best which would permit me to live in Tokyo after my parents' death. Ours was rather an old family, and comparatively well known in the neighbourhood. I presume it is also true in your neighbourhood that it is considered rather a misfortune to sell or destroy a house belonging to an old family while there is still an heir. Now of course such things never trouble me, but at that time, being only a child, I was perplexed by the dilemma arising from my desire to study in Tokyo and my duty to maintain my own house.

My uncle, unable to find any other way, consented to occupy my house, adding that it would probably suit him very well to have his own house in the town, and go backwards and forwards to mine. Of course I had no objection to this proposal. I wanted to go up to Tokyo under any condition.

Childish as I was, I still looked upon my house in the country with the fond eyes of my heart, though my body was not there. I saw it with the heart of a traveller who had still a home of his own to which

he could return. Even I, who left my native place yearning for Tokyo, felt strongly that I had to come back home during the holidays. After a day of serious study and pleasant amusement, I often dreamed of that house to which I expected to return when the holidays came.

I don't know how my uncle took care of the two houses during my absence. But when I reached home, all his family had assembled in my house. Perhaps his children, who went to the schools in the town, spent most of their time in the town-house, but they had come to mine, partly to enjoy their holidays in the country.

All were pleased to welcome me home. I was glad to find my house livelier and merrier than when my parents were alive. My uncle turned out his eldest son, who occupied the room which had been mine, and told me to take it. I said it did not matter, for there were many empty rooms in the house, but my uncle insisted that the house was mine and that particular room belonged to me.

With nothing unpleasant or sad but the memories of my father and mother, I spent that summer with my uncle's family, and returned to Tokyo again. The only event which cast a shadow upon my heart was the united advice of my uncle and his wife that I, who had just entered the high school, had better marry. I remember hearing the same thing three or four times during the summer. At first, its suddenness astonished me. The second time, I posi-

tively declined to listen to it. But when they repeated it the third time, I asked them why they suggested such a thing. It was quite simple, and all they said was that I should return home as soon as possible and take care of this house with my wife. I had been thinking that if only I returned home during the holidays it was enough. To take care of the household as my father had done, and to have a wife to help me, sounded quite reasonable. Especially I, who knew the custom of the country, understood this well. Perhaps I was not absolutely opposed to following it. But having just gone to Tokyo to study, the prospect seemed very distant, as if I were looking at something through a telescope. Finally I left my home again without consenting to my uncle's wishes.

6

After that I forgot all about it. Among all those youthful faces which surrounded me there was not one which looked as if it belonged to a married man. Every one without exception was free, and seemed to be single. Perhaps if I had penetrated into the other side of their lives, I might have found some among these carefree students who had been obliged to marry through some family circumstances, but childish as I was, I did not realize that. Besides I think those who were put in such especial circumstances were reservedly careful not to talk

about their personal affairs so entirely remote from student's life. When I thought about it later, I found that I myself was among this number. But without even realizing this, I went along the road of learning, innocent and content.

When I finished the first year, I roped up my basket-trunk again, and returned to my native place where my parents' grave lay. I saw the unchanged faces of my uncle and his wife and their children in my parents' house as I had done the year before. Again, I smelt the smell of my old home there, the smell which was still dear to me. If only to break the monotony of the school life, this atmosphere was certainly precious to me.

But in the midst of this atmosphere, the same kind of atmosphere in which I had grown up, I was suddenly confronted by my uncle with my marriage problem. What he said was only the repetition of the previous year's advice. The reason was the same as before. But while he had no definite plan the year before, this time he had found the very girl for me; no other than his own daughter, my cousin. He pointed out that it would be convenient for both families if I married her, and that my father, too, had referred to it while he was alive. I thought that it probably would be a good arrangement and that my father had probably such intention. But I realized this for the first time when I had heard my uncle's words, never before. So I was amazed. But at the same time I could well understand the

propriety of his desire. Perhaps I was thoughtless. I admit that I was careless, but perhaps the chief reason for my surprise was my indifference to my cousin. Ever since I was a child, I had visited my uncle's in the town, and frequently stayed for several days, and my cousin and I were always good friends. You know that a love affair never occurs by any chance between brother and sister. Perhaps I am extending this well known fact for my convenience too far, but I think that between a man and a woman, who always see each other and are too friendly, the freshness which creates the attraction necessary for love is lost. As we can relish the real fragrance of incense only when it has just begun to burn, and as we can taste *saké* only at the first sip, so there is also a critical moment in the impulse of love. I cannot think otherwise. If we once pass that moment without action, the oftener we see each other, the duller become our impulses to love, and on the other hand we become more friendly. I could not persuade myself to marry my cousin, in spite of my effort to reconsider the matter.

My uncle said they could postpone our marriage till my graduation, if I insisted upon it. But quoting the proverb, "Do what is good as soon as you can," he added he wanted to finish our marriage ceremony at once, if possible. To me, who had not the slightest intention of marrying her, it made no difference. I declined it again. My uncle looked uncomfortable, and my cousin cried. She was un-

happy, as a woman who had been rejected, but she was far from broken-hearted. I knew quite well that she did not love me any more than I loved her. I went to Tokyo again.

7

It was at the beginning of summer a year later that I returned home the third time. I always fled from Tokyo, as soon as I finished the yearly examinations. So dear was my native place to me. You know this feeling too, don't you? The air of the place where one was born has a different hue; the smell of the earth, too, is peculiar to the place. There were remembrances of my father and mother floating deliciously. To spend the two months of the year, July and August, like a snake in a hole, quite still and warm, wrapped up in those dear memories, was more soothing to me than anything else.

Simple as I was, I thought there was no need to worry about my marriage affair with my cousin. I believed that I could decline it if I was not disposed to it, and that the affair would end after my refusal. So in spite of my stubbornness in not acting as my uncle had wished, I was quite calm. I had never felt any anxiety during that whole year, and returned home as happy as before.

But my uncle's attitude had changed. He would not take me to his bosom with the same cordiality

as before. Yet I, who had been brought up with loving care, did not mark this for several days. But I began to feel something strange about him suddenly, and realized that he was not the only person that had changed. His wife, too, behaved strangely, as did my cousin also. Even his son, who had written to me asking about the Tokyo Higher School of Commerce which he was intending to enter, was different.

My nature was such that I could not help thinking about it. Why had my feelings changed like this? O no, not mine, but why was their attitude so altered? Suddenly I wondered if my dead parents had washed my dull eyes so that I could clearly see the world. I believed in some corner of my heart that my parents, though they had disappeared from this world, would still love me as they had done while they were alive. Although even at that time I was never dull-minded, the weight of superstition that I received from my ancestors was also hidden in my blood with a strong force. I think it lies in me even now.

I, all alone, climbed the hill, and knelt before my parents' grave, partly to express my grief, but partly to thank them. I prayed them to protect my future destiny, feeling as if my future happiness were still held in their hands as they lay under this cold stone. You may laugh, and I don't wonder, but I was such a youth.

My world completely changed in the twinkling

of an eye. But this was not my first experience. I think it was when I was fifteen or sixteen that I was astonished to discover suddenly for the first time the fact that there was beauty existing in this world. Many a time I doubted my eyes, and many a time I rubbed them, crying out at the same time, "How beautiful!" It is at about that age that both boys and girls, if I may use the popular expression, are awakened to the sense of sex. It was then that I could look at women for the first time as the representatives of beauty in the world. My blind eyes were opened suddenly toward women whose existence I had not noticed before. After that, my world was entirely renewed.

This realization of my uncle's attitude could perhaps be compared with the former awakening. I understood all at once. The realization came suddenly, without any expectation or preparation. He and his family suddenly looked entirely different from what they had been before. I was amazed, and wondered what would become of me if I left the matter alone.

8

I began to feel that I should be ashamed to face my dead parents if I did not secure the minute information about my property which I had hitherto entirely entrusted to my uncle. As he himself was always remarking, my uncle was busy and did not

return to the same house every night. If he stayed about two days in my house, he spent the following three days in his own house in the town. Thus going backwards and forwards, he looked restless every day, and often uttered the word *busy*, as if it were his favourite word. When I did not doubt him, I thought he was really busy. Also I took it cynically that he was like this because it was modern to appear busy. But when I watched this busy uncle with eyes made keen by the purpose of having a long talk with him about my property, I could not help feeling that it was only his excuse to avoid me. It was not easy for me to find the opportunity of catching him.

I heard from one of my old class-mates of the middle school that my uncle had a mistress in the town. It was not at all strange for one of his disposition to do such a thing, but I, having never heard such a rumour while my father was alive, was astonished. This class-mate told me many other things about my uncle. Among other things I heard he, who had been at one time almost on the verge of failure, had suddenly become prosperous during the past two or three years. This served to strengthen my suspicion.

Finally I began negotiations with my uncle. The word negotiation might be too strong, but our talk naturally took such a process that I cannot but describe it by this kind of word. My uncle would continue to regard me as a child. From the

beginning, I faced him with eyes of doubt. It was natural that the question could not be solved peacefully.

I am sorry that time does not permit me to describe in detail the process of this negotiation. To speak the truth, I have far more important things than this to tell you. From the beginning of this letter, I could barely control my pen which was eager to reach that account. I, who lost for ever the opportunity to have a quiet talk with you, am obliged to omit what I long to write; the result not only of my inexperience in writing, but also of my having to save precious time.

You may remember even now what I once said to you—that there is no man born wicked in this world, and that one must take care, because many honest persons are influenced by circumstances to be suddenly dishonest. Then you reminded me that I was excited, and asked me what circumstances turned good people into bad. When I replied with the single word ‘money’, you looked dissatisfied. I remember quite well that look of yours. Now I confess to you that I was thinking of my uncle at that time. I was thinking of him with hatred, as an example of the fact that ordinary men become suddenly wicked at the glimpse of money, and of the fact that there can be nothing trustworthy in this world. My answer might be unsatisfactory to you, who were going to plunge into the depth of the world of thought. It may be too matter-of-fact.

But to me it was a living answer. Indeed was I not excited? I believe that commonplace ideas passionately expressed are more effective in real life than the original inventions of a detached intellect. Because it is the heat of the blood that impresses us, for in addition to the words which reverberate in the air, the emotion by its intensity pierces to the soul.

9

In a word, my uncle cheated me of my property, which he was able to do easily during the three years of my absence. I, who had been not at all anxious about putting everything in his charge, was really a fool from the point of view of the world. If criticized from an unworldly point of view, perhaps I may be called a rare example of humanity extremely innocent and pure. When I think of myself in those days, I feel mortified at my credulity, and wonder why I was not born less innocent. But sometimes I feel a longing to restore that genuine unstained self and live as I did long ago. Remember, I, whom you know, am the one soiled with dust. If we call those who have been stained longer one's superiors, I may certainly be your superior.

If I had married his daughter as he desired, would it have proved more advantageous to me from the point of view of money? I think this is unquestionably plain. My uncle schemed to press me

to marry his daughter. His advice came rather from the far baser motive of interest, than from any desire to advance the convenience of both families. I did not love my cousin, but I did not dislike her. But when I thought about the situation later, I felt quite pleased that I had refused her. Perhaps it did not make much difference, but, though I had been cheated materially, I persisted in my will not to marry her, and in this point, I disappointed him. But this is merely a trifle, not worthy of being questioned. Especially to you, an outsider, this may seem extremely foolish obstinacy.

Between my uncle and me, another relative came as a mediator. But I did not trust the man at all. I not only distrusted him, but regarded him as my enemy. When I realized that my uncle had deceived me, I concluded that the others would certainly cheat me. If my uncle, whom my father so praised, turned out like this, what could be expected of others? This was my logic.

But they collected all the property which belonged to me, which was far less than I expected. There were only two ways for me to take; one, to accept it without a word, or to act publicly against my uncle. I was mortified, and at the same time puzzled. I feared that the lawsuit would take a long time. I thought it would be extremely uncomfortable for me as a student to be robbed of the precious hours for study. At last, after much thought, I decided to ask my old friend in the town

to change all I got into currency. He pointed out that this was not advantageous to me, but I did not listen to him. At that time I made up my mind to leave my native place for ever. I swore to myself not to see my uncle again.

Before I left the country, I visited my parents' grave again. I have never seen it since. I think the opportunity of seeing it will never come to me again.

My old friend managed everything as I told him. But this was long after I reached Tokyo. It was not easy to sell fields in the country; besides there was some danger of being cheated when people got to know about me, so the money I received was far less than the value of the land. I confess that all my property consisted of some public bond which I took with me to Tokyo, and this money sent by my friend later. As my inheritance from my parents, it was undoubtedly very much diminished. I felt all the more unhappy because I myself had not been responsible for it. Yet it was more than enough for me to live on as a student. In fact, I could not use half of the interest. Because of this materially ample student's life, I fell into circumstances which I had never dreamed of.

10

Not being in straitened circumstances, I began to think of leaving the noisy boarding-house, and

thought it might be possible to have my own home. But the trouble of buying utensils, and finding an old woman to keep the house, who must be honest, so that I should never be anxious when I went out, made it rather hard to carry out my plan. One day, idly thinking that I should find a house as the first step, I took a walk, going down Hongo Hill westward, and walking straight up the slope of Koi-shikawa toward Denzuin. Since the tram-way was made, the view has become entirely different, but in those days, on the left-hand side was the earthen wall of the Arsenal, and on the right was a vacant plot, which I can call neither a field nor a hill, and which was covered all over with grass. I stood amidst that grass, and accidentally looked at the cliff in front of me. It is rather pretty even now, but in those days, the westward view was very much different. It was all green as far as I could see, and my nerves found a rest. Suddenly I wondered if there was any house suitable for me in this neighbourhood. So I proceeded northward along a narrow lane across the grassy field. The unstable houses, which even now are not very imposing, were in extreme disorder in those days. I went through an alley, or turned a by-street, and walked round and round that district. Finally I asked a coarse-confectioner's wife whether she knew a neat little house to let. "O let me see," so saying, she thought a while, with her head bent on one side, but she seemed not to know of any. I concluded that it

was hopeless to find one, and turned to go, when she asked, "Wouldn't you like to live in a family?" Somehow, I changed my mind, and began to think it better to live quietly in an ordinary home, than to be worried with many a housekeeping matter. So sitting down in that shop, I asked her all about it.

It was the home of a certain officer's family. She said that the master had died in a war, perhaps the one between China and Japan. Till about a year ago, they had lived in Ichigaya, near the School for Regimental Officers. Then, as the mansion was too vast for them to live in, having even a stable for horses, they sold it and moved to this neighbourhood. But suffering from loneliness, they asked her to find someone suitable to live with them. She told me that there was no one living in this house except a widow, her only daughter, and their maid. I felt that it might be quiet and suit me. But I was afraid that I might be instantly refused, as a student whose character and family were unknown to them, if I suddenly ventured to call at that house. I wondered if I should return. But as a student, I was not so poorly dressed. Besides I had my university cap on. You may laugh, saying what was the importance of a university cap. But the university students in those days were very much more trusted in the world than they are now. I even found a sort of self-reliance in this square cap then, and visited that officer's family as I was told, without any letter of introduction.

I saw the widow, and explained why I had come. She asked me many questions about my native place, my school, and my special subject. Perhaps she found something to assure her; she gave an answer there and then that I could come any time. She was an upright, clear-minded woman. I admired her, thinking that this was probably the usual type of an officer's wife. At the same time, I was surprised, and wondered why she felt lonely, having a disposition like this.

11

I removed at once. I took the room in which I talked with the widow when I first came to see her. It was the best one in that house. In those days, houses which could be called high-class boarding-houses were beginning to be built in Hongo, so I knew what the best room that a student could have looked like. The room, of which I became the new owner, was far finer than any of those. For the present, it even seemed to be too luxurious for a student.

It was an eight-mat room. Beside the alcove, there were a pair of shelves at different levels, and a closet six feet long at the opposite side of the verandah. There was no window, but the sun shone brightly through the open verandah in front of the room.

On the day of my arrival, I looked at the flowers in the alcove and the *koto*¹ leaning against the

¹ A kind of musical instrument.

wall beside the vase. I liked neither of them at all. As I was brought up beside my father, whose hobbies were poetry, writing, and the tea ceremony, I had had somewhat Chinese taste since I was a child. For that reason perhaps, I had acquired a habit of feeling contempt for such gay decorations as these.

Though the curios and the pictures my father had picked up while he was alive had disappeared while they were in the hands of my uncle, there were some left. Most of them I entrusted to my old friend when I left my native place, but I brought four or five interesting pictures in the bottom of my basket-trunk. I was looking forward to hanging them in the alcove as soon as I removed. But having seen the flowers and the *koto*, I suddenly lost the courage. When I knew later that these flowers were arranged to welcome me, I smiled sardonically to myself. As for the *koto*, which had been there from before, they had to leave it there, because there was no other suitable place for it.

When I tell you things like this, a young woman's shadow may naturally sweep through your head. In me, too, such a curiosity had been active already from the beginning. Perhaps this poisonous feeling destroyed my naturalness, or I was not used to people, I was quite upset when I was introduced to her. She, too, blushed.

I had been imagining all about this girl, with the widow's figure and manner in mind. But that fancy was not very flattering to her. I concluded

that the widow was like this because she was an officer's wife, and imagined that, as her daughter, the girl might be like that. Thus I extended my supposition. But it was all extinguished at the moment when I saw her, and the perfume of woman which I could not imagine till then newly came into my mind. After that, I no longer disliked the flower arrangement in the alcove, and no longer regarded the *koto* as a nuisance.

Those flowers were changed for new ones regularly when they began to wither. The *koto*, too, was often carried away into the opposite room beyond the corridor, bent key-like. I listened to that *koto* being played as I sat at my desk, with my chin on my hands. I could not judge whether it was well done or not. But considering she did not play any complicated tune, I thought that she was not skilful. I concluded that her *koto* was the same as her flower arrangement. I could appreciate the latter well, and she was never good at it.

Yet she did not hesitate to ornament my alcove with many kinds of flowers. Her way of arranging them, however, was always the same. Also the vase was never changed. But as for her music, it was far funnier than the flowers. All I heard was the tone that the chords made, being never able to hear her voice. She sang, but in such a low voice that one might think her whispering into another's ears. Besides, she lost all her voice when she was scolded.

But I was happy to look at these badly arranged flowers, and listened to the *koto* which seemed to be played unskilfully.

12

When I left my native place, I was already in a pessimistic frame of mind. At that time, the idea that human beings can never be relied upon seemed to have penetrated into the marrow of my bones. I began to regard my uncle and his wife, whom I held as my enemies, and my other relatives, as the representatives of humanity. Even in the train, I began furtively to watch my neighbours. When some of them began to talk to me, I was inclined to strengthen my defensive attitude. My heart was melancholy. Often it hung upon me so heavily that I felt as if I had swallowed a lump of lead. Yet my nerves, as I have told you just now, were greatly sharpened.

It seems to me that this was the chief reason why I tried to leave my boarding-house in Tokyo. Of course, I entertained the idea of having my own home because I had money at my disposal, but if I myself had not changed, I would never have troubled myself about my lodgings, however ample my pocket-money might have been.

Even after I moved to Koishikawa, I could not rest my strained nerves for a while. I looked about me, so restless that I was ashamed of myself. It was

only my mind and eyes which were lively, while my tongue began to be less active, which was strange. I sat at my desk in silence, watching at the same time the behaviour of those in the house as carefully as a cat watches a mouse. I cast cautious eyes on them, till sometimes I felt sorry for them. Sometimes I even hated myself, realizing that I was like a thief who was not going to steal anything.

Surely you will wonder why such a man as I could have room in his mind to take any interest in the daughter, to look at her bad flower arrangement with a happy heart, and to listen to her unskilful playing. I cannot answer this, but only relate it as one of the facts in my life. Perhaps you can find an explanation for yourself, so I will only add a few words. I distrusted human beings as regards money, but I had not yet learned to be suspicious in love. Thus the two apparently paradoxical points of view did not yet conflict in my heart.

As I always called the widow *okusan*,¹ I shall continue to speak of her thus. She said I was a quiet gentle youth. Also she praised my diligence. But she said nothing about the uneasy, troubled expression of my eyes, and my restlessness. I don't know whether she was not aware of them, or she hesitated to refer to them, but she seemed to be entirely indifferent to them. At one time, too, she

¹ Usually used for addressing married women, can be translated into English as madam.

told me with much admiration that I was generous. Honest that I was, I blushed a little, and modestly repudiated this praise. Then she explained to me seriously that I probably did not know my own good qualities myself. At first, it had not been her intention to have a student like me to live with her. She appeared to have asked her neighbours to find one of those young officials to whom she could lend her room. So perhaps the idea of a man who was obliged to live in a single room because of his scanty salary had had some place in her mind. And she praised me as generous, comparing me with her imaginary paying guest. In fact, I might be generous about money, compared to those who were in straitened circumstances. But this was not a question of my disposition, so this had scarcely any relation to my inner life. But woman that she was, she tried to extend it to my whole being, and to describe my character with the same word.

13

This attitude of the *okusan* naturally affected my mood. After a while, my eyes began to stop their restless search, and I felt that my mind had come to rest where my body was sitting. In a word, it was perhaps the *okusan* and her family's utter indifference to my prejudiced looks and my distrustful manners that brought me that great happiness. My nerves became gradually calm, because nobody in

the house paid attention to them.

The *okusan* was a woman of experience, so perhaps she treated me like that on purpose, or perhaps she really thought me to be as generous as she said. It is possible to think that my restlessness was merely a phenomenon in my mind, and it did not affect my appearance much, so perhaps the *okusan* was deceived.

As my mind grew calmer, I gradually became more friendly with the family. I sometimes joked with both the *okusan* and her daughter. Sometimes I was called to the sitting-room to have tea, and sometimes I invited them to my own room and gave them cakes. I felt as if the range of my intercourse had become suddenly broader. Often the precious hours for study were disturbed by these new friends. But strangely I did not feel this as a disturbance at all. The *okusan* was of course a woman of leisure. I thought her daughter, who had flower arrangement and *koto* lessons besides her school-work, must be busy, but contrary to my expectation, she seemed to have ample time to spend as she liked. So we three gathered together and talked and idled whenever we saw each other.

It was usually the daughter who came to fetch me. Sometimes she came by way of the corridor, turning it squarely, and stood in front of my room, and sometimes she came through the sitting-room and showed her figure from behind the sliding-doors of the next room. There she stopped for a moment,

then she was sure to call my name and ask, "Are you studying now?" Most of the time I sat gazing at one of those difficult books opened on the desk, so I might be considered a very diligent scholar. But to tell you the truth, I was not so absorbed in these books as I should have been. I was usually waiting for the girl to ask me to tea, though my eyes seemed to be glued to the page. If she did not come, it was my turn to leave my desk and stand in front of her room, saying, "Are you studying now?"

She occupied a six-mat room next to the sitting-room, and the *okusan* was either in the sitting-room or sitting with her daughter. They passed from one room to another, as if there were no partition between them, for the sliding-doors formed no barrier. When I called from the corridor, it was always the mother who said, "Come in." The daughter scarcely answered, even though she was there.

It happened sometimes that the daughter, coming into my room on some errand, sat talking with me alone. On such an occasion, my heart was strangely affected with uneasiness. I did not think it was merely because a young lady was sitting in front of me that I was uneasy. I began to be restless, and the unnatural attitude with which I was, as it were, betraying myself annoyed me. But she was quite calm. She was not shy, till I began to wonder whether she could be the same girl who could scarcely sing when she practised the *koto*.

Sometimes when she stayed too long, and her mother called her, she did not even rise quickly, though she answered that she was coming. Yet she was not childish. I knew that quite well. It was even clear to me that she was trying to make me understand this.

14

After she went away, I sighed, relieved. At the same time, I felt dissatisfied and sorry for her. Perhaps I was effeminate. You, the present-day youth, may perhaps think me so. But most of us, in those days, were like that.

The *okusan* was almost always at home. When she went out at all, she did not leave us alone. I could not make out whether she managed this on purpose or not. I don't like to tell you such a thing as this from my own mouth, but when I observed her carefully, she seemed to be cherishing a desire that her daughter and I should become more intimate. Yet on some occasions, she seemed to keep secret watch on me. I, who experienced such a thing for the first time, sometimes felt uncomfortable.

I wanted her to decide upon one or the other of her two attitudes. From the point of view of reason alone, they were clearly a contradiction. But I, in whom the remembrances of my uncle were still fresh, could not but doubt further. I supposed that one of these attitudes was true, and the other

was false, and wondered. Not only was I at a loss to find which was true, but also I could not understand why she assumed them. I, who, no matter how I tried, could not understand why she should have these two points of view, sometimes satisfied myself by casting all the blame upon the word *woman*. Anyhow, she was like that because she was a woman, a woman was a foolish creature. This was my conclusion, whenever my thought came to a stop, without finding any solution.

I, who had such contempt for women, could not slight the daughter. My judgement was not active when I was with her, till it seemed entirely powerless. For her I entertained love which was almost faith. You may think it strange that I extend this word used exclusively to religion to a young lady, but I firmly believe even now that real love does not much differ from religious emotion. Whenever I looked at her face, I felt as if I were becoming beautiful. When I thought of her, noble emotion seemed to take hold of my being at once. If there are two sides in the wonderful thing love, the holy emotion working on the higher side, and the sexual desire moving on the lower side, my love was certainly the one which followed the higher trend. Of course I, as a human being, could not leave the flesh. But my eyes which looked at her, and my heart which thought about her, had not the slightest flavour of the flesh.

As I felt antipathy to the mother, and at the

same time my love for the daughter increased, the relation of us three became gradually more complicated. But that change was mostly the inner one, the one which would not show itself. Then I happened to realize that I had misunderstood the *okusan*. I recognized her contradictory attitudes toward me and realized that they were both true. Besides, I began to think that those two things did not rule her mind by turns, but they existed in her bosom at the same moment. In a word, I observed that though it seemed to be contradictory that she kept watch upon me when she tried to make us attached to each other, she neither forgot nor denied her desire when she seemed to be watching me, but she still wanted us to love each other. I explained that she only disliked our attachment to go beyond what she approved as right. I, who had not the slightest intention of approaching the daughter in any but the most honourable way, thought that her anxiety was useless. But my feeling of antipathy toward her disappeared as soon as I understood her real motives.

15

When I considered carefully the behaviour of the *okusan*, I came to the conclusion that I was trusted by both the mother and the daughter. I even found some evidence that the mother had trusted me from the very beginning. This discovery

seemed rather strange to my mind which had become suspicious. I thought that women had more intuition than men. At the same time, I felt that it might be because of this quality that women were deceived by men. But I, who observed the *okusan* in this way, was ruled by the same strong intuition in my love for the daughter, which now makes me laugh. Because I trusted the daughter absolutely, even while I was vowing that I would never trust anyone, and yet the very trust which the *okusan* entertained toward me made me regard her as rather queer.

I told them almost nothing about my native place, especially about the misfortune which had befallen me. Even to think of it made me uncomfortable. So I tried to listen to the *okusan* as much as possible. But they, on their part, would never be satisfied with this, and were eager to know the circumstances of my own home, till finally I told them everything. When I said that I should never return to my native place again, and that if I returned at all, there was nothing but my parents' grave, the *okusan* looked very much moved, and the girl cried. I felt that I had done a good thing by telling them, and I was glad.

The *okusan*, who heard everything about my past, began to assume the attitude of one whose intuition had proved true. After that she began to treat me as if I were one of her young kinsmen. This did not annoy me, but rather pleased me. But

before long, my suspicion was aroused again.

It was only a trifle that made me uneasy. But as those trifles were accumulated one by one, the root of my suspicion gradually grew. Quite suddenly, I began to wonder whether the *okusan* was eager to make her daughter attached to me prompted by the same motive as my uncle. Then the woman who looked kind suddenly appeared to me a cunning schemer. I bit my lips bitterly.

The *okusan* had announced from the beginning that she was taking care of me because her family was small and lonely. I did not think it a lie. After I became intimate with her, and was told many of her private affairs, this still seemed true. But generally their financial condition was not very prosperous. From the point of view of money, therefore, it would be of no disadvantage for them to be connected with me.

I began to be on my guard again. But why should I assume this attitude, I who deeply loved the daughter as I told you? What was the good of being suspicious of her mother? I laughed at myself. Sometimes I railed at myself, saying, "Fool!" But if it had been all, I should never have been much tortured, fool though I was. I was agonized by the horrible doubt that the daughter was a schemer as well as the mother. As soon as I wondered if they two were planning everything behind my back, my pain became so great that I felt as if I could not bear it. I was not merely uneasy, but almost driven to

desperation. Yet, I trusted the daughter firmly, and never doubted her. So I stood still between trust and delusion, not able to move at all. To me both my trust and delusion were at once the products of my imagination and the reality.

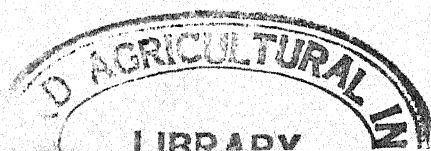
16

I went to school as before. But I felt as if the professors' voices were sounding from far away. It was the same with my work. The letters which came before my eyes disappeared like vapour, before they penetrated into the depth of my mind. Besides I became taciturn, which some of my friends, misunderstanding, interpreted as a sign of meditation. But I did not try to explain away this misunderstanding. Rather I was glad because happily they lent me a convenient mask. Yet sometimes perhaps I was not satisfied, and surprised them by suddenly assuming an attitude of hilarity.

This house had very few visitors. They did not seem to have many relatives. Though the daughter's class-mates came sometimes, they always left the house after talking with her in very low tones, so low that one wondered whether they were really talking. I never realized at all that this was because they were afraid of disturbing me. For there was no one among my friends who, coming to see me, felt constraint towards the family; though we were never very rowdy. In this point, I, the

paying guest, was like the master of the house, and the daughter, the owner of the house, was, as it were, put into the situation of a dependent.

This I write only as I remember it, and not because it is important to my story. Yet there was one thing to which I could not be indifferent. Sometimes quite suddenly, I heard a man's voice in the direction of the sitting-room or the daughter's room. The voice, quite different from my friends', was so low that I could not catch what he was talking about. As it was more difficult to hear, it produced a kind of excitement in me, till I became strangely nervous. First of all, I wondered whether he was their relative, or whether he was merely their acquaintance. Then I wondered whether he was young or middle-aged. But it was impossible for me to know such a thing by sitting in my room. Yet it was more difficult for me to go and see him, by opening the sliding-doors. My nerves, trembling, nay beating rather in huge waves, tortured me. After the visitor left, I always asked his name. The reply of the daughter and her mother, however, was very simple. But I had not courage enough to question further, though I could not hide my dissatisfied look from them. Of course, I had no right to do that either. I let them see simultaneously my self-respect which came from my education and prompted me to maintain my dignity, and my hungry look which actually betrayed it. They laughed, and I so lost my composure that there was no room left



in my mind to judge at the time whether that laughter came from their goodwill, or was only their affectation of goodwill. After all had passed, I said to myself over and over again that perhaps I was being fooled by them.

I was quite free. I had no necessity to consult anyone, even if I wanted to leave school, and I could live where and in what way I liked, and marry any woman from any part of Japan. Many times, I made up my mind to be bold and ask the *okusan* to give me her daughter. But whenever I determined upon this course, I hesitated, and did not say a word about it. It was not because I feared to be refused. I did not know how my destiny would change if I were refused, but I was able to brace up my spirits by reflecting that such a refusal would give me a chance to survey the new world from a different standpoint. But I hated to be taken advantage of. It hurt me more than anything else to have others play a trick on me. I, who had been deceived by my uncle, made up my mind never to be victimized again.

17

As I was always buying books, the *okusan* advised me to get some clothes as well. Indeed, all the *kimonos* that I had were made of country-woven cotton. Students in those days never wore silk. When one of my friends, the son of a merchant in

Yokohama who lived quite luxuriously, received a package containing a silk undergarment, all laughed at it. He, quite ashamed, apologized profusely, and throwing the undergarment into the depth of his basket-trunk, would never use it. But his mischievous friends all gathered together, and forced him to wear it. Then, unfortunately, it happened that lice bred in it. Perhaps he regarded it as a piece of good luck, and folding the famous undergarment into a bundle, he threw it into the big ditch of Nezu, when he went for a walk in that direction. I, who was with him then, standing on the bridge, looked at him and laughed, without the slightest realization that it was wasteful to do such a thing.

I had grown much older since then. But I had not sense enough to get a visiting *kimono* myself. I had a funny idea that it was not necessary for me to be worried about clothing, till the time came for me to graduate and grow a moustache. So I said to the *okusan* that *kimonos* were not necessary for me, though I needed books. The *okusan*, who knew how many books I used to buy, asked me whether I read all of them. Sometimes I bought dictionaries, but some books were left in my book-cases with the pages uncut, when I ought to have read them. So I did not know what to say to her, and realized that if I bought things I did not need, it did not matter whether they were books or clothes. Moreover, I wanted to give the girl an *obi* or a *kimono* that she would like, on the pretext of expressing

my gratitude to the *okusan* and her daughter for their kindness to me. So I asked her to make purchases for me.

The *okusan*, however, said that she was not going alone, but ordered me to accompany her. She wanted her daughter also to go with us. We, as students, were brought up in an atmosphere different from that of the present day, and were not accustomed to go out with a young lady. In those days, I was more enslaved to customs than I am now, so it was after some hesitation that I made up my mind and went.

The daughter was very much dressed up. Her face, which was naturally fair, she painted so thick that she was conspicuous in the streets, where passers-by gazed at her. Those who looked at the girl were sure to turn their eyes and look at me, which was indeed rather embarrassing.

We three went to Nihonbashi and finished our shopping. As we had difficulty in selecting what we wanted, it took longer than I had expected. The *okusan* always took the trouble to call me, and ask my opinion. Often she put the cloth on her daughter's shoulder, and asked me to look at it from a distance of two or three steps' away. And I spoke out my opinion as if I were a grown-up who could appreciate such things, saying that this would never do, or that suited her very well.

As we spent much time on this, it was supper-time when we left the shop. The *okusan*, saying that

she would treat me in acknowledgement of my present, took me to a narrow by-street where there was a story-teller's hall called Kiharadana. The shop where we dined was as narrow as the by-street. I, who was completely ignorant of this neighbourhood, was surprised at her rich information.

We returned home rather late. The next day was Sunday, and I stayed in my room all day. On Monday morning as soon as I went to school, one of my class-mates made fun of me. He asked me in an affected manner when I had been married, and said that my wife was very beautiful. Probably he had seen me going to Nihonbashi with the ladies.

18

When I returned home, I told this to the *okusan* and her daughter. The former laughed, and looking at me, added that I must have been uncomfortable on hearing such things. At that moment, I wondered whether men were tempted to confess their minds by women in this way. The *okusan's* eyes had meaning enough to make me think so. Perhaps it might have been better for me to avail myself of that opportunity and confess frankly what I felt. But a lump of suspicion was even then sticking in my mind. I stopped suddenly just before I began to speak, and deliberately shifted the angle of conversation a little.

I withdrew myself from the centre of the discussion, and groped for the *okusan's* intention about her daughter's marriage. She told me distinctly that she had had two or three proposals of marriage, but as she was young, and had not yet left the high school, she was not in a great hurry. She seemed to be depending much upon her daughter's beauty, though she said nothing. She even observed that she was not anxious about the girl because she could find a husband for her at any time. Another reason for her not being eager to part with her daughter easily was that she was the only child. What she said made me wonder if she was puzzled even about whether she should adopt a young man as her daughter's husband.

As I talked with her, I felt as if I had got a great deal of information. But the result was that I missed a chance of asking for her daughter's hand. I could not speak a word about myself to the last. I tried to put an end to our talk and return to my room.

As we were talking, the daughter, who had been with us a little while before and laughed over my story, saying, "O dear! How could he say such a thing?" went to the corner of the room and sat there with her back towards us. When I turned my head as I was just going to stand up, I saw her back. But we cannot read others' feelings only by looking at their backs, and I could not make out her ideas on this question. She sat facing the closet which

was opened about a foot, and seemed to have taken something out of it and to be looking at it on her lap. I found the piece-goods that we had bought two days before at the front of the closet. My *kimono*, as well as the daughter's had been piled up in the corner of the same closet.

As I turned to go in silence, the *okusan*, assuming all at once a serious tone, asked me what I was thinking. That question was so sudden that I could not understand its meaning unless I asked again what she meant. When it became clear that she meant to ask whether she had better get her daughter married early or not, I replied it would be better to be slow about it. She said she thought so too.

While the relationship between the three of us was like this, it happened that another man came into this family. This event completely changed my destiny. If this man had not crossed the course of my life, perhaps there would have been no need to leave you such a long letter as this. I was, as it were, unaware of a devil which had been passing by me and of my whole life's being darkened by the devil's shadow cast on me at that moment. To tell you the truth, I myself brought him to this house. Of course, I had to ask the *okusan's* consent; so first of all, I confessed to her everything and asked her to take him. But she advised me not to do such a thing. She had no clear reasons at all for disagreeing with me, while I had causes enough to

bring him there. So I actually carried out what I thought best, in spite of the *okusan*'s unwillingness.

19

I shall call this friend's name K. He had been my intimate friend since our childhood, so you will understand clearly without further explanation that we were from the same native place. He was the second son of a bonze of the Shinshu¹ sect. Consequently he was adopted by a doctor. The Honganji¹ sect had great power in the district where I was born, and the bonze of the Shinshu sect seemed to be more well-to-do than those of other sects. For instance, if the daughter of a bonze became of marriageable age, the supporters of the temple, finding a suitable man, would marry her. Of course, her father had no necessity to be worried about the wedding expenses, which were raised by those supporters. Therefore most of the families of the Shinshu bonzes were prosperous.

The family in which K was born was fairly well-to-do. But I don't know whether they could have afforded for their second son to go up to Tokyo to study. Nor do I know whether they agreed to the proposal of K's adoption because this meant the prospect of his studying in Tokyo. At any rate, he was adopted by a doctor's family, when we were still in the middle school. I remember even now

¹ The Shinshu sect and the Honganji sect are the same thing.

how surprised I was to find K's surname suddenly changed when our teacher called the rolls.

K's adopted family, too, was fairly well-to-do. They supported him in Tokyo. We did not travel together, but as soon as he reached Tokyo, he came to live with me in the same boarding-house. In those days, two or three students often lived in one room, and K and I occupied the same room. Perhaps we were like captured beasts from a mountain embracing each other in a cage, glaring out of the cage at the same time. We two feared Tokyo and the people in Tokyo. Yet, in our six-mat room, we were talking about our ambitions as if we had been standing on the highest peak contemplating the whole world.

But we were in earnest. We really intended to become great men. K was especially strong. He, who was born in a Buddhist family, was always using the word *shojin*,¹ and all his behaviour seemed to me to be rightly described by this word. Secretly I always venerated him.

While he was still in the middle school, he puzzled me with difficult questions concerning religion or philosophy. I don't know whether this was due to his father's influence over him or to the atmosphere belonging to his own home, which was a part of the temple. At any rate, his character seemed more bonze-like than that of ordinary bonzes.

¹ Word of Buddhistic origin meaning devotion.

Now, the real intention of K's adopted family in sending him to Tokyo was to make him a doctor. But obstinate as he was, he came up to Tokyo resolved not to become a doctor. I rebuked him saying that he was, as it were, deceiving his foster-parents. In his boldness he replied that he was, adding that his behaviour was pardonable because he chose this in quest of the *michi* (way of truth). Perhaps this was not very clear even to him. Of course I don't say that I could understand it. But in our youth this obscure word sounded noble. If it were not clear to me, yet his attitude of striving forward towards his ideal, inspired by his noble spirit, was free from all meanness, and I agreed with him. I don't know how much he was assured by my consent. I think the single-minded K would have carried through what he thought best, however strongly I might have opposed him. But though I was yet a child, I knew quite well that, having encouraged him, I should be more or less responsible for him, if something happened. Even if I had not realized this at that time, I agreed with him with such conviction that when it became necessary for me to look back to the past with the eyes of a grown-up I had to take my proper share of responsibility.

K and I entered the same department. With

the money sent by his adopted family, K began to walk the road of study which he liked, and did not seem to be troubled. I cannot explain his composure except that he knew they would never find out what he was doing in Tokyo, and he would not care if it were known. K was calmer than I.

When the first summer holidays came, he did not return to his home. He said he was going to study in a room of a certain temple in Komagome. It was at the beginning of September that I came back, and found him really shut up in a dirty temple near Ogannon. His was a narrow room next to the *hondo*,¹ but he seemed to be happy because he could study as he had planned. I think I perceived then that his life began to be more and more bonze-like. He had a rosary round his wrist. When I asked why he had such a thing, he pretended to count the beads one by one with his thumb. Every day he seemed to be counting them in this way over and over again. But its meaning was not clear to me. When we count the ring of beads one by one, we never come to an end. At which bead, and in what mood did K stop his fingers? I often think of this, though it is only a trifle.

Also I saw a Bible in his room. I had often heard the names of the Buddhist Scriptures from him, but we had never discussed Christianity, so I was surprised, and could not help asking him why.

¹ Main room for worship.

He said there was no reason. He added that it was proper to try to read it, when it was a holy book and so dear to many people. Besides he said that he was intending to read the Koran sometime. He seemed to have great interest in the words, 'Mohammed and the sword.'

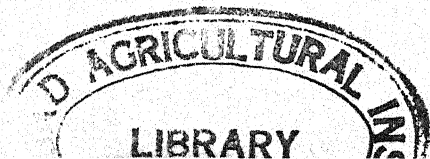
In the second summer, urged by his family, he finally returned to his native place. But he seemed to be silent about his special subject. His family, too, did not discover it. Perhaps you, who have had the same education, know such circumstances as this. The world is surprisingly ignorant concerning the students' lives and the school regulations. Things which are well known to us are not communicated to the outside world at all. We, for our part, breathing the air of the school nearly always, are apt to think that everything concerning our school is surely known in the world. Perhaps K knew more about the world than I on such matters and returned to Tokyo as calm as ever. We left our native place by the same train, so as soon as we got into the carriage, I asked him whether he had been in any trouble. He replied that nothing had happened during the vacation.

The third summer was that memorable one when I made up my mind to leave for ever my native place where my parents' grave lay. I advised K to return home, but he would not hear me. He asked me what was to be achieved by returning home every year. He seemed to be intending to study,

staying in Tokyo again. So I could not help deciding to return alone. I told you before how eventful were the two months which I spent in my native place, so I am not going to repeat it. Embracing discontent, melancholy, and lonely solitude in my heart, I saw K again in September, and found that something had been going wrong in his life, too. He had written to his adopted family himself and confessed what he had done. He said he had resolved to do this from the beginning. Perhaps he had some hope of getting their permission to follow the course he had chosen as they could not change what he had done. At any rate, he had no intention of continuing to deceive his foster-parents after he entered the university. Perhaps he realized that even if he tried he could not succeed in deceiving them for long.

21

K's adopted father was furious when he read K's letter. At once he wrote to him severely, saying that he could never give money to one who was so insolent as to deceive his parents. K showed me that letter. Also he showed me another which he received soon after from his own family. In this too, there was as strong a reprimand as in the other. Perhaps the sense of obligation to the adopted family added to their anger; they said they, too, would not take care of him at all. Whether K should



return to his original family, or remain in his adopted family, and find some way of compromise, were questions for the future; but the immediate problem was how to get money needful for his study.

I asked K whether he had any idea about this question. He replied that he was intending to become a teacher at one of the night schools. In those days, it was easier to live in the world than it is now, so it was easier than you imagine to find private occupation for students. I thought that it would give him money enough to support himself. But I, for my part, felt my responsibility. It was I who agreed with him when he decided to follow the course that he liked, opposing his adopted family's wish. Therefore, I could not take up the attitude of a looker-on, and let him do what he liked: so I immediately told him that I would help him financially. But K refused it at once. Probably it seemed far more tolerable to one of his disposition that he should support himself than be protected by his friend. He said that he would never be called a man unless he could earn his own living, when he was already a university student. I could not bear to hurt his feelings to satisfy my sense of responsibility. So I let him do what he liked, and withdrew my hands from this problem.

Soon K found a position which suited him. But it was only too easy to imagine how hard this occupation was to one who so valued time. He,

however, rushed on his way, burdened with the new occupation, and never attempting to lessen the hours of private study. I was anxious about his health. But with his natural pluckiness, he only laughed, and would not pay any attention to my advice.

At the same time, the relations between his adopted family and himself became more and more complicated. He had no time to spare and so was deprived of the opportunities to talk with me; therefore I did not hear about the details to the last, but I knew that the settlement of this matter was becoming more difficult. Also I knew that somebody acted as arbitrator between K and his adopted family. This man wrote to K, advising him to return to his native place, but he insisted that the case was hopeless and did not follow this advice. This obstinacy—K said he could not return because it was the middle of the term, but he must have appeared stubborn in their eyes—seemed to have made the matter worse. His original family, too, began to look on him with anger. I was anxious, and hoping to soothe their feelings, I wrote to them; it was no use. My letter was utterly disregarded, and I did not get even the briefest answer. I was mortified, and though I had been on K's side from the beginning, I now made up my mind to be K's friend, no matter what happened.

Finally, it was settled that K should return to his original family, and that the amount spent on

his education by his adopted family should be repaid by his father. But his original family said that they would not help him any more, but he could do what he liked. To use the old saying, he was cut off with a shilling. Perhaps they did not feel quite so strongly as this, but K himself interpreted it as such. K had no mother. I am sure one side of his character could be considered as the result of his being brought up by a step-mother. I think if his own mother had been alive, the relations between him and his family might have been closer. K's father was of course a bonze, but I wonder if he were not more like a *samurai*,¹ because he was so upright.

22

After K's affairs were settled, I received a long letter from his sister's husband. K told me that as K's adopted family was related to this man, his views were held important both when K had been adopted and when he was returned to his original family.

In the letter, the man asked me to let him know how K was faring after the event. He added that he would be much obliged if I answered him as soon as I could, because K's sister was anxious about him. K liked this married sister better than

¹ Warrior.

his brother, who had inherited the temple. Though they were all born from the same mother, she was much older than he. So, in his childhood, perhaps this sister seemed to him more of a mother than his step-mother.

I showed K the letter. He said nothing, but he confessed that he had two or three letters from his sister which said the same thing. He said that whenever he heard from his sister, he answered that there was no need for her to worry about him. Unfortunately this sister married a man whose family was in rather straitened circumstances, so she could not help him financially, however sympathetic she might be.

I answered his brother-in-law in the same way as K had answered his sister. I said very firmly that they should be assured as I would do my best for him if anything happened to him. Of course K knew nothing about this. I felt kindly toward K's sister, who was much worried about her brother's future, but at the same time I was prompted by my anger toward the others who could not but be regarded as holding me in contempt.

We were in the first year at the university when K returned to his original family. For a year and a half, he supported himself without the aid of anybody. But overwork seemed to affect his health and his spirit. Of course the complicated problem of his returning to his original family having been added to it, he became more and more morbid.

Sometimes he spoke as if he alone were loaded with the misfortunes of the world, and was excited if I denied it. Besides he was worried, feeling as if the light which lay in his future was gradually receding from his eyes. At the beginning of our study, we all start the new voyage with great expectations, but as the time of graduation approaches we realize how slow our steps are, and more than half of us are sure to be disappointed then. It was thus with K, but he was far more impatient than the ordinary students. In the end I thought it best to calm his mood.

I advised him to give up his private occupation, adding that he had better decrease his burden and enjoy himself in preparation for his great future. I had feared that the obstinate K would not listen to me easily, but it was actually even more difficult than I had expected. This troubled me. K insisted that studying was not his only purpose. He said he wanted to become a strong man by nurturing the power of his will, and concluded that in order to do this, he must experience hardships. From the ordinary man's point of view, he seemed almost mad. Added to this, in spite of his ascetic way of living, his will was actually becoming weaker. His nerves were almost in a state of collapse. There was no other way for me but to agree, till I announced that I, too, was intending to walk the road of life in the same spirit. (This was not entirely false. He had so much force of character that when

I listened to his opinion, I was gradually made to feel just as he did.) Then at last I said to him that I wanted to live with him so that we might walk the way of progress together. I went so far as to kneel before him, in order to bend his stubbornness, and finally brought him to our house.

23

My room had attached to it a four-mat ante-room, which we had to pass through when we came from the entrance. Though this ante-room was very inconvenient, this was to be for K's use. At first I thought of putting K's desk beside mine in my eight-mat room, so that we could use both rooms together. But K, saying that he preferred to have his own room even if it were small, chose that small room himself.

As I told you before, the *okusan* did not agree with this arrangement at first. She said that if her house were an ordinary boarding-house, it would be more convenient to have two people instead of one, and more advantageous to have three instead of two, but as she was not doing this as her profession, I had better give up this idea if I could. When I said that he would never give her any trouble, nor make her busier, she replied that she did not like to live with a stranger whose character was unknown to her. When I rebuked her, saying that she knew little of me when I came, she apologized profusely,

telling me that she could judge my character from the beginning. I laughed bitterly. Then the *okusan* changed the course of her reasoning, and said that it was not good for me to bring such a man. When I asked her why, it was her turn to smile bitterly.

To tell you the truth, there was no necessity for me to live with K at all. But I was afraid that he would hesitate to accept my help every month, if I offered it in the shape of money; his sense of independence was so strong. So I tried to let him live in our house, and secretly handed the *okusan* the payment for our food though he was not aware of it. But I had no intention of confessing a word to the *okusan* about K's finances.

I only told her about his health. Also I said that he would become more and more perverse if I left him alone. I added an account of his trouble with his adopted family and of his separation from his original family. I told them I was going to bring K there, with the resolution of one who was holding a half-drowned man close to his bosom to give him the warmth of his own body. I asked both the *okusan* and her daughter to take care of him kindly, bearing this in mind. It was by this confession that I persuaded the *okusan* at last. But K, who heard nothing from me, was ignorant of all this. This satisfied me all the more, and I greeted K, who moved to our house, looking as if nothing had happened before he came.

The *okusan* and her daughter kindly helped him

to unpack and arrange his things. I was pleased interpreting this as due to their friendship for myself, though K retained his unsociable manner.

When I asked him whether he liked his new residence, he simply replied that it was not bad. From my point of view, it was more than that. He had left a dirty musty room facing the north. The food was as poor as the room. The difference was something like that of a bird coming out of a deep valley and nestling in a high tree. His attitude of concealing his real feelings at this change came from his stubbornness, but also partly from his philosophy of life. Brought up in the Buddhist doctrines, he considered it immoral to say anything about living, food, or clothes, and having read the lives of the bonzes and saints of old days, he was apt to separate the spirit from the body. Perhaps sometimes he felt as if the spirit increased its brightness by torturing the flesh.

I tried as much as possible not to oppose him. I planned to melt the ice in the sun. I was sure that time would come for him to get self-knowledge, if he melted and became water.

24

That was the manner in which the *okusan* had treated me, and as the result of which I had gradually become cheerful. Realizing this, I tried to apply the same method to K. I, who had been his friend

for a long time, knew quite well that K and I were very different in our dispositions, but I thought that as my nerves had more or less recovered since I had come to live in this family, K's mind and heart too would some day be calmed in this house.

K had a stronger resolution than I. I think he worked about twice as much as I did. Besides he was born with a far better intellect than mine. I cannot judge from our university work, as we differed in our special subjects, but both in the middle school and the high school while we were in the same class, K was always ahead. I always felt that I could not surpass him in anything. But when I forced him to come to our house, I believed that I had more reason and common sense than he. As I saw it, he did not seem to understand the difference between super-endurance and patience. I want to add this especially for you, so please listen to me attentively. All our faculties, both physical and spiritual, are developed or destroyed according to the stimuli given from the outside. But as in both cases it is of course necessary for the stimuli to be increased gradually, it is to be feared that without great care a man may be unaware how his strength is weakening, and so may be even those who observe him. A doctor explains that there is nothing idler than the stomach. When we eat *kayu*¹ all the time, we lose our power to digest any-

¹ A kind of porridge made of rice.

thing harder. So he says we must try to eat a variety of things. But I think we cannot explain this by the simple fact that our stomachs become accustomed to such food. It must mean that by the gradual increase of stimuli, the digestive faculties become stronger. We can easily understand this by imagining what would happen if, on the contrary, our stomachs should become gradually weaker. Though he was a greater man than I, K did not notice this point at all. He seemed to have been sure that if he became accustomed to the difficulties, they would become more bearable to him, till they would not trouble him at all. He seemed to have believed absolutely that the more hardships he experienced the sooner he would reach the state of not being troubled by them, because his repeated experience would inure him.

When I persuaded him, I was anxious to make this clear to him. But I knew it was useless to argue. I thought he would be certain to refer to the great men of old, and then I should have to explain that there was a great difference between him and those sages. If he would accept this, it would be all right. But he would never give in, when our discussions reached this point. He would step forward, and try to actualize what he said by his behaviour. In this point, he was terrible, and great. He would go on to destroy himself. If one judged from results, he was great only in power of destroying his own success; but he was not an or-

dinary man. I, who knew his disposition well, could, after all, say nothing to him. Besides, in my opinion, he appeared to be suffering from nervous strain. Even if I managed to convince him, he was bound to become excited. Though I was not afraid of quarrelling with him, when I looked back upon my past tortured by solitude, I could not bear to put my best friend in the same solitary situation. Further, I did not like to throw him into greater perplexity. So after he moved to our house, I did not say anything critical for the time. I decided to watch gently the effect of his surroundings upon him.

25

When K was not there, I asked the *okusan* and her daughter to talk with him as much as possible, because I was sure that his past life of silence had affected him. I could not think but that his mind had become rusty, like unused iron.

The *okusan* laughed, saying that he was a man with whom one never knew how to become friendly. The daughter took the trouble to explain this comment by illustration. When she asked him whether there was any glowing charcoal in his brazier, he replied that there were none. When she said she would bring some, he said he did not need them. Then she asked whether he was cold, he replied that he was, but that he did not need them; then

he plunged back into silence. It was not enough for me to smile bitterly; I had to say something to express my regret and apologize for him. It was spring then, so it was not necessary for us to have the brazier all the time, but I felt that their comments had been reasonable if he behaved like this.

I tried to establish normal intercourse between K and the ladies by making myself the centre of the circle. I tried to make them intimate by adopting different ways suitable for every occasion, sometimes inviting the ladies into the room where K and I were talking, or calling K when they and I were in the same room. Of course K did not like this. At one time, he stood up suddenly and left the room; at another time he would not leave his own room, though I called him again and again. K asked me how I could enjoy such idle conversation. I only smiled, but I could understand quite well that K was holding me in contempt for this.

In some way, I might be really worth his contempt. One may say that K's ideal was far higher than mine. I, too, do not deny this. But he was, as it were, a deformed person, because other things in him did not conform to his ideal. I thought it was best to try to make him human, above all things. I found that however full his head might be with the images of great men, it would be no use unless he himself became great. I planned to make him sit beside the women as the first step toward making him human. I attempted to expose him to the

feminine atmosphere, and then renew his blood which was beginning to rust.

This attempt gradually succeeded. Those who looked incompatible at first gradually began to unite. He seemed to realize little by little that there existed a world outside himself. One day he said to me that women were not so contemptible after all. K seemed to have been requiring from them the same knowledge and learning as I had, and to have felt contempt as soon as he found out that this was hopeless. He had been judging all men and women by the same standards, without realizing that he had to change his point of view according to their sex. I said to him that if he and I only were to talk and exchange thoughts for ever, we should grow only as two straight lines. He replied that he quite agreed with me. In those days, I was more or less absorbed in my love for the daughter, so perhaps such an expression as this was natural for me. But I did not confess a word to him about my inner feelings.

It was most pleasant for me to see K's mind, which had been, as it were, walled in by books, becoming gradually more and more friendly. As I started this plan inspired by that purpose from the beginning, I could not help feeling the pleasure which accompanied my success. Instead of remarking on this to him, I told the *okusan* and the girl what I thought. They, too, looked satisfied.

Though K and I were in the same department, our special subjects were different, so the time for our going to school and returning home was not always the same. When I came back earlier than he, I only passed through his empty room, but if I was later, I used to enter my room greeting him in a friendly manner. K would look from his book, and glance at me as I was opening the sliding-door. He was sure to say, "Have you just come back?" Sometimes I only nodded, saying nothing, but sometimes I passed his room simply replying, "Yes."

One day I had some business in Kanda, and came back much later than usual. I walked quickly to the gate, and opened the entrance-door with a rattling sound, when I heard the daughter's voice. Certainly it seemed to come from K's room. If you went straight from the entrance-hall, passing the corridor beside the sitting-room and the daughter's room, and turned to the left, you would find K's room and mine, so I, who had stayed in the house for a long time, could well discern where the voice came from. I shut the entrance-door at once. Then the daughter's voice, too, stopped. While I was taking off my boots—even in those days I used lace boots which were at once chic and troublesome to put on—no voice was heard from K's room. I wondered, and thought that it might have been my

mistake. But when I opened the sliding-door, to pass through K's room, the two were sitting there. K said as usual, "Have you just come back?" The daughter, too, greeted me as she sat, saying, "O here you are." That simple greeting seemed to me a little formal. It sounded in my ear as a tone from which naturalness had disappeared. I asked her about the *okusan*. There was no meaning in my question. I asked just because the house was more quiet than ever.

The *okusan* was out, as I thought. The maid, too, had gone with her. So K and the daughter had been alone in the house. I inclined my head a little. During the long time that I lived with them, the *okusan* had never gone out, leaving the daughter and myself alone, so I asked if something urgent had happened. She only laughed. I did not like women who laughed at such a time. Of course this is common with young girls, and the daughter, too, was apt to laugh at a trifle. But perceiving my expression, she returned to her usual countenance, and answered gravely that though it was not urgent, her mother was obliged to go out on business. I, the paying guest, had no right to question further. So I was silent.

As soon as I had changed my dress and was sitting at my desk, the *okusan* came back with the maid. Then the time came for us to meet at the dinner table. When I first came to live with them, I was treated as a guest in every way, so the maid

brought my meals to me. But we had gradually changed our custom, I knew not when, and I was now accustomed to being called in to the sitting-room for meals. When K moved here, I asked them to treat him as they did me, and gave the *okusan* a slender table made of thin boards with legs which could be folded. A table like this is used everywhere now, but in those days, there were almost no families that took their meals around such a table. I had taken the trouble to go to a shop of household furniture in Ochanomizu and order it to be made as I planned.

At that table, the *okusan* explained to me that as the fish-man did not come at the usual time, she had to go to buy something to give us at supper. When I understood that it was natural for them to do such a thing with guests in their house, the daughter looked at me and began to laugh again. But this time she stopped at once, when her mother reproved her.

27

A week later, I passed through the room where K and the daughter were again talking together. As soon as she saw my face, she began to laugh. Perhaps it would have been better if I had asked her what she was laughing about, but I went to my room in silence. So K could not ask me his usual "Have you just come back?" The daughter seemed

to open the *shoji*¹ at once, and enter the sitting-room.

At dinner, the daughter said that I was a funny man. This time, too, I did not ask her why. Only I noticed that the *okusan* directed her eyes toward the girl as if she were reproving her with them.

After supper, I took K with me for a walk. We passed through the street of the Botanical Garden from the back of Denzuin, and came again to the bottom of Tomisaka. It was not a short walk, but during the time we said very little. From the point of view of disposition, K was more taciturn than I. I, too, was not talkative. But as I walked, I tried to speak to him as much as I could. My questions were chiefly concerning the family in which we lived. I wanted to know K's opinion about the *okusan* and her daughter. But all his answers were so vague that I could not decide whether he was "in the sea or on the mountain". Besides, they were very simple, though they were not to the point. He seemed to be caring more for his special subject than the two women. But as it was just before the examinations at the end of the second year, perhaps he was more studious than I, when looked at from the ordinary point of view. Besides, he discussed Swedenborg, and surprised me, for I did not know of such a man.

When we passed our examinations, the *okusan* was pleased, saying that we two were going to graduate after one more year. Her daughter, too, who

¹ Paper sliding-door, sometimes with a pane of glass in the middle.

could be regarded as her only pride, would leave her school before long. K observed to me that a girl left school knowing nothing. K seemed to be disregarding sewing, the *koto* playing, and the flower arrangement that she was practising besides her studies. I laughed at his carelessness, and repeated my old argument that the value of women did not lie in great learning. He did not oppose me. But he did not appear to agree with me. To me, this was pleasant, because he seemed to be thinking little of the girl whom I regarded as the prototype of women. When I look back, I find that my jealousy toward him had already sprung up at that time.

I consulted him about the place where we should go in the summer holidays. K expressed his unwillingness to go. Of course he was not financially able to go anywhere he liked, but he could go anywhere if I asked him. I asked him why he did not want to go. He said there was no reason, and that it was more agreeable for him to read books at home. When I persisted that it was better for our health to go to a summer resort and study in that cool place, he said I had better go myself. But I could not leave K here alone. I was not very comfortable to see K and the family becoming more and more intimate. I cannot say anything if somebody asks me why I was displeased with the realization of my first hope. I must be a fool. The *okusan*, who could not bear to hear our endless discussions, came

between us. Finally it was decided that we were to go to Boshu together.

28

K had not travelled much. For me, too, it was the first visit to Boshu. We, knowing nothing, landed at the place where the ship stopped for the first time. I remember it was certainly the place called Hota. I don't know whether it is much different now, but in those days it was quite a miserable fishing port. First of all the smell of fish pervaded everything. As soon as we went into the water the skin of our hands and legs was rubbed off as we were thrown about by the waves, for big stones, as large as our fists, were always tumbled about by the rushing waves.

Soon I became tired of the place. But K did not say whether he liked it or not. At least his look was calm, though he always came back bruised whenever he bathed. Finally I persuaded him, and we went to Tomiura. Then we moved from Tomiura to Nako. In those days, all the places on this coast were chiefly summer resorts for students, so everywhere we found bathing-places suitable for us. K and I often sat on the rocks on the beach, looking at the colour of the sea far away and the seabottom near us. The water, seen from the rocks, was exceedingly pretty. We could point at the small fish, variously coloured, red, deep blue, and colours

which we could not see in the fish sold in the market, swimming to and fro in the transparent waves.

I often opened my books on those rocks. But mostly K sat there in silence, without doing anything. I could not understand at all whether he was musing, or absorbed in the scenery, or thinking at random. Sometimes I looked up, and asked him what he was doing. K always replied simply that he was doing nothing. Often I imagined how happy I should have been if the one who sat still beside me had been the daughter instead of K. What was more, suddenly I began to wonder whether K, too, was sitting with the same desire as mine, and all at once, I hated to sit there calmly with my book. When I felt like this I always stood up at once, and cried out in an unreserved, loud voice. I became so wild that it was impossible for me to recite or sing poems or songs, but I only cried out as if I were a savage. At one time I suddenly snatched at the nape of K's neck from behind, and asked him what he would do if I threw him into the sea. K did not move, and replied, "Do. It is just what I should like," without turning his head. Then I let go his neck at once.

At that time, K seemed to have almost recovered from his nervous state. But on the contrary, I became more and more nervy. Looking at K who was calmer than I, I envied him, and at the same time I hated him, because he seemed to be

indifferent to me. This attitude of his appeared to me as a sort of self-confidence. But if I found that self-confidence in him, I could never be satisfied. My doubt pushed itself forward, and wanted to make clear its quality. Was he feeling as if he had regained the light in his future for his study or his work? If that was all, there was no reason why K's interest and mine should collide. I should be all the happier, because my pains taken on his account had been rewarded. But if his satisfaction came from the daughter, I could never forgive him. Strangely enough he seemed to be utterly unaware of my inclination toward the daughter. Of course I did not behave in a way to make him understand it, and he was naturally not sharp at comprehending a thing like this. From the beginning I felt certain that there was nothing to fear from K on this score, so I took the trouble to bring him to our house.

29

I finally made up my mind to confess my feeling to K. This was not the first time I had taken such a resolution. I had thought of it before leaving Tokyo, but I was not skilful enough either to find or to make an opportunity. When I think of this now, I am impressed by the artificiality of the men who surrounded me. There was not one who could talk naturally about anything where woman

was concerned. Perhaps many of them had nothing to tell, but even those who had were silent. You, who have been brought up in the comparatively free atmosphere of today, would certainly find this strange. I will leave it to your understanding to judge whether it was the remnant of Confucianism, or a sort of shyness.

K and I were friends who could talk about everything. On rare occasions we talked about love, but it always ended in abstract reasoning. Besides, this was very rare. Most of our talks were about books, learning, the work we were going to do in the future, our expectations, and our culture. However intimate we had been, we were so impersonal that I could not change the tone of our conversations suddenly. We two were as intimate as we were awkward. After I made up my mind to confess my feelings for the daughter, how many times was I troubled by impatient uneasiness! I wanted to break some part of his head, and pour some fresh air into it.

The thing which would seem quite ridiculous to you was indeed a great difficulty for me in those days. I was a coward while we were on this trip as well as when we were at home. Though I was always observing him to seize an opportunity, I could not do anything about his strangely high and oppressive attitude. From my point of view, his heart was, as it were, thickly covered with black lacquer. All the blood that I was going to pour was repelled,

not even a drop of it ever getting into that heart.

At one time, I felt rather reassured, K's manner being so strong and noble. I secretly repented of my suspicion, and at the same time, I asked his pardon in my mind. So doing, suddenly I felt uncomfortable, as I myself appeared so base. But after a while, the former suspicion came back again, and attacked me with strong force. As everything had a doubt for its starting-point, everything was disadvantageous to me. As far as personal appearance went, K seemed to be more liked by women than I. As for our dispositions he seemed to attract women more, because he was less sensitive than I. In some things he was stupid, yet there was a trustworthy manliness about his character, which seemed to be more to his advantage. From the point of view of learning, of course I realized that I was not even his rival, though our special subjects were different.—Thus when only his strong points began to appear in my eyes all at once, I, who felt a little assured, reverted to my old uneasy doubts again.

Perceiving my restless manner, K suggested that if I did not like it at the seaside, he would return to Tokyo with me. But at these words, I suddenly became inclined to remain. Perhaps I did not want K to return to Tokyo really. We two went round the south end of the peninsula, and came to the other side of it. Tortured in the heat of the sun, we walked on, deceived by the people

of Kazusa who always replied to our question that our destination lay within two miles. I could not understand why we were walking like this. I told him so, half jesting. Then K replied that he was walking because he had two legs. When he felt hot, he said we would swim in the sea, and we bathed in whatever place we happened to be. After that, the sun shone upon us again, till our bodies became quite heavy and weary.

30

As we walked along like this, we naturally became more and more affected by heat and fatigue. But this was different from illness. I felt all at once as if my spirit had moved to another's body. As I talked to K as usual, I felt somewhere in my mind that I was not my usual self. My intimacy as well as my hatred toward him began to have a special quality, by which I felt as if these feelings toward him would only last during this trip. In a word, perhaps we two could form a new relationship by the heat, the sea, and our walk, quite different from the usual one. We at that time were like two pedlars who had come to be fellow-travelers. Contrary to our earlier custom, we did not touch complicated questions which would require brain-work, however much we talked.

▼ In this state, we went up to Choshi, but there is one occurrence during this trip that I never can

forget. Before we left Boshu, we saw Tainoura¹ in the place called Kominato. Many years have passed since that time, and moreover I was not particularly interested in it, so I don't remember exactly, but it was said to be Nichiren's² native village. They said that on the day of his birth two sea-brems were thrown upon the shore. Ever since that time, the fishermen did not dare to catch sea-brems, so there were a great many of them in the bay. We hired a boat, and took the trouble to have a look at the fish.

In those minutes on the sea, I looked only at the waves, never tired, watching one of those interesting phenomena—the multitudes of the fish moving like a purplish cloud in the sea. But K did not seem to take the same interest in them as I did. He seemed to be imagining Nichiren rather than the sea-brems. There was a temple called Tan-joji³ there. Perhaps they named it so because it was in the village where Nichiren was born. It was a fine temple. K suggested that he should visit it and talk to the bonze in charge. To tell you the truth, we were quite strangely dressed, especially K who wore a sedge hat in place of his own which had fallen into the sea. We both wore dirty, ill-smelling clothes. For this reason I said that we had better not visit a bonze. But with his usual obsti-

¹ Bay of Sea-brems.

² A famous saint who initiated one special sect of Buddhism.

³ Temple of Birth.

nacy, he refused to listen to me, and said that if I did not like to go I should wait outside the temple. Not knowing what to do, I came to the entrance with him, but I was sure that we should be refused. But the bonze was more polite than I had expected, and showing us into a fine vast room, interviewed us at once. In those days, my ideas were very different from K's, so I was not very much inclined to listen to his conversation with the bonze, but K seemed to be asking many questions about Nichiren. I remember even now that, when the bonze said that Nichiren was so skilful at writing letters in a cursive style that he was called the cursive Nichiren, K, who was not good at writing, looked disappointed. Perhaps K wanted to know Nichiren's deeper self, and not such a superficial detail. I wonder whether the bonze satisfied him in that point, but at any rate he began to talk about Nichiren as we left the temple-yard. I was too hot and tired to talk about such a thing, so I was only talking mechanically, without serious thought. But as even such a remark as this was troublesome to me, I finally collapsed into silence.

I am sure it was the night after that we two, reaching an inn, had supper, and just before going to bed, began all at once to discuss difficult questions. K was displeased with my indifference to Nichiren when he had been talking about him. He attacked me, saying that those who had no idea of spiritual progress were foolish, as if I had been such

a shallow man. As for me, as there was a lump in my bosom concerning the daughter, I could not accept with a smile his words which were verging on contempt. I, for my part, began to apologize.

31

At that time, I often used the word human. K said that I was hiding all my weakness in this word. Indeed, when I thought of this later, it was just as K had said. But I, who began to use that word in order to make him understand the meaning of being inhuman, was already rebellious from the start, so there was no room in my mind to examine myself again. I insisted on my own opinion all the more. Then K asked me in what point he was inhuman. I told him that he was human, or rather he might be too human, but in his speech and behaviour he assumed the attitude of a superhuman.

When I said this, all that he replied was that as his moral training was not enough, he might seem thus in others' eyes, never attempting to contradict me. I felt sorry for him, rather than disappointed. I stopped the argument at once. His tone, too, gradually sank. He looked sad, saying that if I knew men of the old days as well as he did, I should never attack him in this way. The men of the old days about whom he spoke were of course neither heroes nor great men, but those ascetics who tortured the flesh for the spirit, or

afflicted the body for the truth. K said clearly that he was very sorry because I did not understand how much he was suffering from it.

Then K and I went to sleep. The next day onwards, we returned to our usual attitude of pedlars, and began to walk, groaning and perspiring. But on the way, I often remembered our talk that night. The sense of remorse blazed up in my mind, as I thought how I had not seized the best opportunity offered to me, pretending I had nothing in my mind. I began to think it would have been better for me to confess the direct and simple truth instead of using such an abstract word as human. To tell you the truth, my adoption of such a word was founded on my feelings toward the daughter, so perhaps it had been more advantageous to me to expose everything as it was before his eyes than to blow into his ears reasonings made by the distillation of the reality. I confess that the reason why I could not do this was because I had not courage enough to dare to break down the habit which existed between us, whose intimacy was founded on the intercourse of learning. It might be the same if I said that I was too affected, or that I was cursed by my vanity, but the meaning of affectation or vanity that I mention here is a little different from what is usually implied. If that is clear to you, I am satisfied.

We returned to Tokyo, sun-burnt. When I reached Tokyo, my feelings were different. There

was almost no argument remaining in my mind, the argument of human, or inhuman. In K, too, not a glimpse of the manner of a religious enthusiast remained. Perhaps the questions of spirit and flesh did not exist in his mind. With an appearance of men belonging to a different race from those around us, we two looked about Tokyo, which seemed to be busy. Then we came to Ryogoku, and ate cochin-china fowl, though it was so hot. K proposed that we should walk to Koishikawa, strengthened by the meal. In physical strength, I surpassed K, so I consented to it at once.

When we reached home, the *okusan* was surprised. We were not only browned, but we had become thin, as we had walked immoderately. Yet the *okusan* praised us saying that we looked strong. The daughter began to laugh again, pointing out the *okusan's* funny contradiction. I, who had often felt angry before my trip, was pleased with her laughter that time. Perhaps because it was on such an occasion, and because I heard it after a long time.

32

What was more, I noticed that the daughter's attitude had changed a little. We, who had come home after a long trip, needed a woman's overhauling before we could return to our normal routine, and the daughter, not to speak of the *okusan*, seemed to take care of my affairs first, postponing K's. If

she had been too candid, I might have been troubled, and on some occasions, I might have felt rather uncomfortable, but the daughter's behaviour was quite to the point, so I was pleased. In other words, the daughter showed her characteristic kindness to me more than she did to him, in a manner that I only could understand. K did not seem to notice this, and did not look displeased. I uttered a song of triumph over him secretly in my heart.

Soon the summer being over, we had to go to school in the middle of September. Because of our different time-tables the times of K's and my going to school and returning home began to be different. About three times a week I returned home later than K, but whenever I returned I never found the daughter in K's room. K, casting his usual glance at me, repeated his "Have you just come back?" regularly. My greeting was simple and meaningless like a machine.

I remember it was in the middle of October. I happened to get up late, and went to school in a hurry, without changing my *kimono*. To save time, I ran out of the house in *zori*.¹ That day, I was to return home earlier than K. When I reached home, and bearing that in mind, opened the entrance-door with a rattling sound, I heard K's voice. At the same time the daughter's laughter sounded in my ears. As I had not my troublesome lace boots on

¹ A kind of sandals.

as usual, I stepped into the entrance and opened the sliding-door. I saw K sitting at his desk as usual. But the daughter had already disappeared. I caught only a glimpse of her back leaving K's room as if she were running away. I asked K why he had come back early. K replied that he did not go to school because he was not quite well. As soon as I entered my room and sat there, the daughter came bringing tea. It was at that time that she greeted me for the first time. I was not the kind of man to ask her smilingly why she had run away before. Yet I was troubled somewhere in my mind by this. The girl stood up at once and went away from the corridor. But she stopped in front of K's room, and spoke a word or two to him. They seemed to be finishing their talk of a little while before, but I, who was not with them, could not understand it at all.

Then the daughter's attitude gradually became less reserved. Even when both K and I were at home, she often came to the corridor in front of K's room and called his name, and entering his room, stayed there. Of course sometimes she came with letters, and sometimes with laundry, so such an intercourse must be regarded as proper, considering that they were in the same house. But to me, moved by the strong desire to have the daughter all to myself, there seemed to be more in it. Sometimes I even felt that the girl shunned coming to my room on purpose and visited K exclusively. Then you

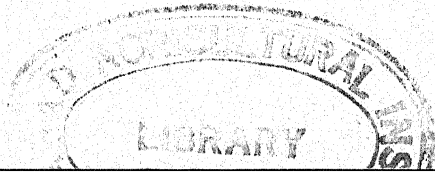
will ask me why I did not ask K to leave this house. But if I had done so, this would only have ruined my purpose in bringing him first to this house, and I could not do this.

33

It was one chilly rainy day in November. I, with my wet overcoat, passed through the shrine of Konnyakuemma as usual, and walked along the narrow slope toward home. Though K's room was empty, there was fresh charcoal glowing in the brazier. I, wanting to warm my cold hands over the red coals at once, opened the sliding-door in a hurry. But all I found there were cold white ashes remaining in my brazier, and even a small lump of kindling charcoal was extinguished. I felt suddenly uncomfortable.

Then hearing my footsteps, the *okusan* appeared. She, glancing at me, who stood silently in the middle of the room, helped me to take off my overcoat and change my *kimono*, looking sorry for me. Then, hearing me say that I was cold, brought K's brazier from the next room at once. When I asked her whether he had come back already, she replied that he had gone out again. On that day, too, K was to return home later than I, and I wondered. The *okusan* said that perhaps he had some business.

For a while, I sat there, reading. While the house was hushed and not a voice was heard, the



cold loneliness of the beginning of winter seemed to be penetrating into my body. I stood up at once, shutting my book. Suddenly I wanted to go to some lively place. It seemed to have stopped raining at last, but as the sky still looked heavy like cold lead, I carried a *janomé*-umbrella on my shoulder for precaution, and went down the slope eastward along the earthen wall behind the Arsenal. In those days, the streets were not yet improved, so the slope was more sudden than it is now. The road, too, was narrow, and not so straight as it is now. Besides, as I went down to the valley, the street was muddy, because of the south's being blocked with high buildings and because of bad drainage. It was especially bad from the narrow stone bridge to the street of Yanagicho. We could not walk as we liked, no matter whether we had *ashida*¹ or boots on. Everybody had to walk carefully in the middle of the road where the mud had been swept away by frequent passers-by, and as the breadth of this was only a foot or two, it was like walking on an *obi* spread across the street. All the passers-by walked slowly in a line. Unexpectedly, I met K on this narrow *obi*. I, whose attention was fixed on my legs, did not notice his presence at all, till I stood face to face with him. When I happened to raise my eyes, because my front was blocked suddenly, I saw K standing there. I asked

¹ A kind of wooden clogs used on rainy days.

him where he had been. He only replied that he had just been over there. His answer had the usual tone of indifference. We passed by each other on the narrow *obi*. Then I saw a young woman standing just behind him. Being short-sighted, I could not see her well, but as I looked at her face after I passed K, I saw it was the daughter, which surprised me very much. The girl, slightly blushing, greeted me. In those days, the foreign style of doing the hair was different from now, and there was no projection made above the forehead, and the braid of hair was coiled in the middle of the head.

I was looking at the daughter's head absently, but the next moment I realized that one of us had to step aside. I made up my mind, and putting one foot into the mud, left room for her to pass.

Then I came to the street of Yanagicho, but I did not know where to go. I felt as if there was no place which would please me. I walked in the mud desperately, not caring if the splashes stained my clothes. Then I returned straight home.

34

I asked K if he had gone out with the daughter. He denied it, and explained that they had happened to meet at Masagocho and come back together. I had to forbear from further questions. But at dinner, I was tempted to ask the girl the same question. She laughed her usual laugh which I did not like, and

finally asked me to guess where she went. In those days, I was still quick-tempered, so I resented being treated in such a light manner by a young girl. But the *okusan* was the only one who noticed this. K was rather indifferent. As for the daughter, I could not tell whether she was doing this on purpose or whether she really did not understand my feelings. She was thoughtful for a girl, but sometimes I felt something in her common to all girls that I did not like. Besides it was after K had come that this point began to be noticeable. I wondered a little whether I should regard this as due to my jealousy of K or as the daughter's artfulness toward me. Even now, I have no intention of denying my jealousy at that time. Because as I have repeated over and over again, I was clearly conscious of the working of this feeling behind my love. Moreover, this feeling was sure to spring up on occasions which were extremely unimportant in the eyes of lookers-on. I am digressing from the main story now, but don't you think that this jealousy is one half of love? After I was married I realized that this feeling gradually became weaker, when my passion seemed to diminish.

I began to wonder if I should beat my opponent's bosom outright with my confession of love, which I had been hesitating to do. By the word opponent I don't mean the daughter, but the *okusan*. I thought I should open a clear negotiation with the *okusan* for the hand of her daughter. But with such

a resolution, I postponed the day of carrying it out in action. When I speak like this, I appear to have been a weak young man. I don't care if I look so, but it was not really for the want of will-power that I could not proceed. Before K came, my resolution not to fall into a trap oppressed me and made me immovable. After K came, my doubt about the daughter's feelings for K always controlled me. I had made up my mind that if she loved K more than me my love was not worth confessing. This was a little different from mere vanity, from avoiding the sense of shame at a refusal. I hated to marry a woman who secretly poured her affectionate glances on another, however strong my love might be. There are many men who are happy if they force a woman whom they love to marry them. But in those days I thought only worldly men or fools who could not understand the psychology of love could dare such a thing. My love was so strong that the philosophy which taught that a couple could get on if once they were married did not satisfy me. In a word, I was an exceedingly noble theorist of love, and at the same time, a most roundabout lover.

The opportunities for directly confessing to the daughter herself occurred sometimes during my long stay in this house, but I purposely neglected them. In those days, my realization that such a thing was not allowed by Japanese custom was quite strong. But that was not all that bound me. I judged that the Japanese, especially the young women, had not

courage enough to speak without reserve their ideas and feelings.

35

Thus I stood still, being unable to proceed in any direction. You know that when you are not well, and waken from a nap, you cannot move your legs and feet, though you can see things around you quite well. Sometimes I secretly suffered from this feeling.

Soon the old year had gone and the new one come. One day the *okusan* said to K that he should bring some of his friends as she was going to play poem-cards. Then K at once replied that he had not a friend, which surprised the *okusan*. Indeed K had no one whom we could call his friends. There were some who greeted him when they met in the street, but they were the kind of men who would not play cards. Then the *okusan* asked if I could bring some of my friends, but I, too, was not inclined to enjoy myself with such a lively game. So I gave only a vague answer. But at night K and I were finally called out by the daughter. There being no guest, we were the sole players, so we played very quietly. Besides, K, who was not accustomed to such games was like a man who sat with his hands in his bosom. I asked him whether he knew the poems of this game at all. K replied that he did not know them well. Perhaps the

daughter, hearing my words, took them as an insult to K, and began to show clearly that she was standing by him, till she and K almost attacked me together. I might have quarrelled if it had not been for K. But fortunately K's attitude was not at all different from that of the beginning. I, not perceiving any sign of triumph in him, could maintain my composure, and so came safely through that night.

I think it was two or three days after this that the *okusan* and her daughter went out in the morning, saying that they were going to a relative in Ichigaya. The school having not yet begun, K and I were left at home to take care of the house. I did not like either to read or to go for a walk, so I was thinking vacantly, with my chin on my elbows which rested on the edge of the brazier. K, who was in the next room, did not make the slightest sound. We both were so quiet that people would wonder whether we were there or not. But between us this was not at all rare, so this did not trouble me.

About ten o'clock, K suddenly opened the sliding-door and looked at me. He, standing on the threshold, asked me what I was thinking. Of course I was thinking of nothing. If I had anything in my mind, it might of course be the daughter as usual. I could not think of the daughter without thinking of her mother, but recently, K himself, as if he were an inseparable person from this problem, went round and round in my head, making the matter more complicated. I, who saw K, could not

confess this frankly, though I was vaguely conscious of him as a sort of nuisance. I was silent, still looking at him. Then K entered my room, and sat down in front of the brazier at which I had been sitting. I took my elbows off the edge, and slightly pushed it toward K.

K began to talk about a matter alien to his usual self. He asked where in Ichigaya the *okusan* and her daughter had gone. I replied that perhaps it was her aunt's. He asked me what kind of person she was. I told him she was also the wife of an officer. Then he asked me why they went so early, when women's New Year greetings generally took place after the fifteenth. I had no other reply than that I did not know.

36

K never stopped his talk about the *okusan* and the daughter, till he asked about so private a matter that I could not reply. I was more mystified than annoyed. As I remembered his attitude when I talked to him about them, I could not help noticing the change in his tone. I asked him why he talked exclusively about such a thing that day. Then he suddenly became silent. But I watched the muscle of his mouth moving as if trembling. He was taciturn by nature. He had a way of mumbling before he spoke. Perhaps in the fact that his mouth would not open easily as if it were rebelling against

his will, the strength of his words lay. When his words broke from his mouth at all, they had twice as much power as the ordinary man's.

When I saw his mouth, I felt at once that something was coming out, but I had no anticipation as to what it was. So I was surprised. Imagine me hearing from his awkward tongue about his passionate love for the daughter. I was, so to speak, all at once turned to stone by his magic staff. I lost the power even of mumbling.

Shall I describe myself at that time as a lump of fear, or a lump of agony? Anyhow, I was congealed. I was suddenly hardened from head to foot as if I were stone or iron. I became so stiff that I even lost the elasticity of breathing. Fortunately that state did not last long. After a moment, I recovered my personal consciousness, and at once felt that I had been a terrible failure. I thought that I was outstripped.

But I had no idea at all what I should do then. Perhaps there was not room enough for this. I sat still, letting the uncomfortable sweat from my armpits soak into my shirt, while K with his usual heavy mouth, was confessing his love little by little. I was filled with pain. I think that pain was stuck in big letters on my face like a huge advertisement. Even K must have perceived this, but he, on his part, was concentrated on his own affairs, so perhaps he had no time to watch my expression. His confession was in the same tone

from the beginning to the end. It was heavy and slow, but it gave me an impression that it could not easily be moved. My mind was partly listening to that confession, but partly disturbed by the anxiety as to what I should do, so it almost missed the details. Yet the tone of his words vibrated strongly against my bosom, as well as the pain that I have just described. In another word, the sense of dread that he was stronger than I sprang up.

When K's story came to an end, I could say nothing. My silence was not prompted by the sense of interest, whether I should confess the same thing to him, or it was more advantageous that I should be silent. I simply could say nothing. Besides I was not inclined to say anything.

At lunch I sat at the table facing him. Waited upon by the maid, I finished the unusually tasteless meal, during which we two scarcely talked. We did not know when the *okusan* would come back.

37

We returned to our separate rooms and did not see each other. K was as quiet as he had been in the morning. I, too, fell into thought.

I thought it was proper for me to confess my feelings to K. But I felt that it was too late. Why did I not interrupt his words and counterattack him? It began to seem to me that this was my

great failure. I thought, too, that it had even been better if I had followed him and told him exactly what I had felt at that time. At any rate it seemed to me strange to tell him the same thing when K had already finished his confession. I knew no way to overcome this unnaturalness. My head trembled, shaken by repentance.

I hoped that K would open the sliding-door again and rush into my room. From my point of view, I had been, as it were, attacked suddenly. I had made no preparation for receiving his assault. I had a secret idea of recovering what I had lost in the morning, so I often looked up at the sliding-door. But that sliding-door did not open again, and K was quiet all the time.

After a while, my mind began to be disturbed by this quietness. I was tortured when I wondered what K was thinking about behind the sliding-door. In the rooms only separated by sliding-doors, we were always quiet in this way, but it was usual with me that the quieter he was, the more I forgot his existence, so I must conclude that my nerves were much amiss at that time. But I could not open the sliding-door myself. I, who had once lost the chance, could not but anxiously wait for him to approach me again.

Finally I could not sit still. If I forced myself to keep quiet, I should be driven by an impulse to jump into K's room. Not knowing what to do, I went out to the verandah. Then I went to the sit-

ting-room, and with no aim, I poured the hot water from the kettle into my cup, and drank. Then I came to the entrance. In this way, I tried to shun K's room on purpose, and found myself in the middle of the street. Of course I had no idea where to go. Only I could not keep still. So without caring about the direction, I walked about the streets festive with New Year's decorations. My mind was filled with K, however much I walked. But I was not wandering with the desire to shake him off but rather to brood deliberately upon him.

First he seemed to me enigmatic. Why did he suddenly confess such a thing? Or why did his love become so strong that he could not help confessing it to me? And where was his usual self gone? To me all these were difficult to understand. I knew how strong he was, and how sincere. I believed I had many things to decide about him, before I decided upon my future attitude. At the same time, it seemed strangely weird to deal with him in the future. As I wandered in the town, absorbed, I always drew before my eyes his look when he sat quite still in his room. But something told me that I could never move him by roaming about like this. Because, in a word, he seemed to me like a sort of devil. I even wondered if I should be cursed by him for ever.

When I returned home, tired, his room was as still as if it contained no human being.

Soon after I entered our house, I heard the sound of rickshaw wheels. In those days, the wheels had no rubber tyres as they have now, so the disagreeable rattling sound could be heard from a distance. The two rickshaws stopped in front of the gate.

It was about half an hour later that I was called to dinner. But the *okusan* and the daughter's visiting *kimonos* were still lying in a colourful disorder in the next room, left there as they had taken them off. They had come back in a hurry, in order to prepare our dinner in time, so that they should have no regrets on our account. But this kindness of the *okusan* was almost nothing to either K or me. As I sat at the table, I gave them only short, cold answers as if I grudged adding a word. K was more taciturn than I. The two women, who rarely had the opportunity to go out together were much brighter than usual, so our attitude attracted all the more attention. The *okusan* asked me what was the matter. I replied that I was not quite well. I really felt ill. Then the daughter asked K the same question. But he did not give the same reply as mine. He only said that he did not feel like talking. She pursued him, asking why. At that moment I suddenly lifted up my heavy eyelids and looked at him. I had some curiosity about his reply. K's lips were slightly trembling as usual, which appeared to

those who were ignorant of his feelings as if he were wondering what answer to give. The daughter, laughing, observed that he must be thinking of something difficult again. K's face became slightly flushed.

That night I went to bed earlier than usual. At about ten o'clock, the *okusan*, anxious because I had said I was not well at dinner, came to my room with buckwheat hot water. As my room was already dark, she, uttering some exclamations, opened the sliding-door a little. The lamp cast its dim light aslant into my room; K seemed to be still at his desk. The *okusan* sat near my bed, and, saying that as I might have taken cold I had better warm myself, thrust the cup close to my face. So I was forced to drink the muddy water in her presence.

I lay thinking in the dark till it was very late. Of course I was only turning one question round and round, without finding any solution. Suddenly I began to wonder what K was doing in the next room. Half unconsciously, I called to him, "Ho!" He replied with the same "Ho!" K, too, was still awake. I asked him whether he was not going to bed. Then he simply replied that he was. I asked him again what he was doing. To this question he gave no answer. But in about five or six minutes, he opened the closet with a rattle, and the sound of his movement as he made his bed was distinctly heard. I asked him what time it was. K replied

that it was twenty minutes past one. Then I could hear him blowing the lamp out, and all the house was hushed in darkness.

But my eyes grew clearer and clearer in the gloom. I, again in half consciousness, called to him. K replied in the same tone as before. Finally I myself began by asking him whether he would like to talk with me, as I wanted to know more details about what I had heard from him in the morning. Of course I had no intention to exchange such conversations through the sliding-doors, but I thought he would answer me at once. But this time he did not accept my invitation in the same meekness as he had twice replied to my "Ho!", but was hesitating, saying, "Well, but," in a low tone. Again I was suddenly frightened.

39

K's vague answer appeared in his attitude the next day, or the day after. He never appeared to approach the question himself. Besides there was no chance for any talk; because it was difficult for us to speak of such a thing, unless the *okusan* and the daughter should go out together and leave us for a long time. I knew this quite well, but in spite of it, I became strangely nervous. As the result of this nervousness, I, who had at first been secretly preparing for his second attack, made up my mind to begin myself, if I had a chance.

At the same time, I secretly observed the behaviour of the family. But nothing unusual was noticeable in either the *okusan's* attitude or the daughter's behaviour. If there was no difference in their attitude before his confession and after it, it was certain that he had confessed his feelings only to me, and neither the daughter in question nor the *okusan*, her guardian, had yet heard them. When I was certain of this, I felt a little easier. So thinking it better to watch for an opportunity naturally given, than to make one on purpose and begin an unnatural talk with him, I decided to let the matter alone, doing nothing about it.

It sounds very simple when I tell you like this, but till I reached this conclusion there was high as well as low tide, just like the ebbing and flowing of the sea. As I observed K's steady manner, I interpreted it in various ways. Observing the *okusan* and the daughter's words and behaviour, I wondered if they were really the true expressions of their minds and feelings. I wondered whether the complicated machines in man's breast could point to the figure on the board as clearly and truly as the hands of a clock. Understand me in this way—I was finally settled in this point only after I had wrestled with the problem in many ways. To speak more accurately, a word like settle could never be applied to me at that time.

Soon school began again. When our lectures began at the same hour, we left our house together,

and came back together if we could manage to do so. K and I, seen from the outside, were as friendly as ever. But in our minds, we each must have been thinking along independent lines. One day I suddenly attacked K in the street. The point that I first asked him was whether his confession had been restricted to me alone or whether it had been made to the *okusan* and the daughter. I thought that the attitude which I should adopt had to be decided according to his answer. He affirmed that he had not yet confessed to anybody else. Thus the circumstance being as I had assumed it to be, I felt secret pleasure. I knew very well that K was more daring than I. I realized that I could not match him in boldness. But on the other hand, I strangely trusted him. Though he had deceived his adopted family for three years about the money for his study, my trust in him was not the least injured. Rather, I even trusted him all the more because of that. So even the slightest intention of disbelieving his clear answer never occurred in my mind, however distrustful a disposition I might have.

I asked him in what way he was going to treat his love. I questioned him whether it was merely a confession, or whether he was going to take steps so that he would gain what he wanted. But when our talk came to this, he did not answer me anything, but began to walk in silence, looking down. I asked him not to conceal anything from me but to tell me what he thought. He definitely affirmed

that there was no reason for him to conceal anything from me. Yet he never gave me a word about what I tried to know. As we were in the street, I could not deliberately stand still and try to force him to make everything clear to me. So I left the matter there.

40

One day I went to the library in the university. It was a long time since I had last been there. As I sat at a corner of a broad desk, with the upper half of my body basking in the sunshine from the window, I was looking at the foreign magazines newly arrived. I had been ordered by my supervisor to study a certain topic of my special subject by the next week. But as the necessary article was not easily found, I had to change the magazines two or three times. Finally I found the essay I wanted, and began to read it in earnest. Then suddenly someone called my name in a low voice from the opposite side of the desk, and I looked up and saw K standing there. K approached his face to mine, by bending the upper half of his body over the desk. You know that in the library we were not allowed to talk in such a voice as would disturb others, so this action of K's was common behaviour for everybody, but at the moment I was struck with a sort of strange feeling.

K asked me in a low voice if I were studying.

I replied that I had some work to do. But K did not turn his face from me, and asked in the same low voice whether I should like to walk with him. I replied that I could go if he would wait for me for a little while. He said that he would wait, and sat on the vacant chair directly in front of me. Then suddenly it became impossible for me to read the magazine, my attention being diverted. I could not help feeling that K had something in his mind and came to negotiate with me. I could not but shut the magazine which I was reading and stand up. K asked me calmly whether I had finished it already. I replied that it was not necessary for me to finish it then, and after returning it, went out of the library with K.

As we had no place to go to, we came to Ikenohata from Tatsuokacho, and entered the Ueno park. Then suddenly he began to talk about his love. Considering his manner and the circumstances at that time, I think he took the trouble to take me for a walk for this purpose. But his attitude was no more practical than before. He just vaguely asked me what I thought, that is, with what eyes I looked at him, who had fallen into such an abyss of love as this. In a word, he seemed to be wanting my criticism about his condition. In this, I thought I could certainly perceive something different from his usual self. I may be repeating this too much, but his nature was not made so weak that he would be afraid of others' opinions about

him. He had both spirit and courage to go straight ahead all alone, when he once found the right way and believed in it. So it was natural for me, who had been strongly impressed by this trait in his character at the time when he had troubles with his adopted family, to realize that he was decidedly different.

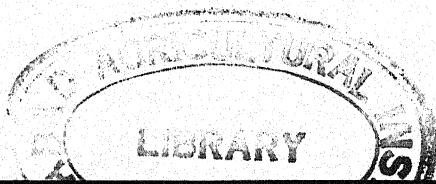
When I asked him why he needed my opinion on the matter, he said in a dispirited tone, quite unusual with him, that he was really ashamed of his being a weak man, and that as he could not make himself out, being doubtful, he knew no other way but to ask me for a fair criticism. I at once asked him the meaning of his being doubtful. He explained that he was at a loss as to whether he should advance or withdraw. Immediately I stepped forward, and asked him whether he could withdraw if he wanted. There his words suddenly failed him. He only said that he was tortured. Indeed his pain was plainly shown in his face. If it had not been the daughter whom he loved, I could have poured a shower of favourable words on his thirsty face, which was like the dry earth crying for the benevolent rain. I believe that I am a man born with such power of sympathy as this. But I was different at that time.

I was watching K as carefully as a fencer going

to try his skill with a follower of another school. I confronted him with everything which belonged to me—my eyes, mind and body—fully prepared for the fight. The innocent K, on the other hand, was so careless that it was more suitable to describe him as thoroughly open to the attack than as full of unguarded points. It was, therefore, as if I could get from his own hands the map of a fortress which he had been keeping, and peruse it before him.

I, discovering K's uncertainty between the ideal and the reality, watched only for the point by which I could knock him down by a single blow, and took advantage of his unguarded side. I suddenly began to assume a grave, serious look. This was of course a part of my scheme, but I actually felt as tense as I looked, so there was no room in me for a sense of shame or an appreciation of the ridiculousness of my own behaviour. First, I cried that those who had no sense of spiritual progress were foolish. These were the exact words by which K criticised me when we were travelling in Boshu together. I threw them down at him, in the same tone as his. But this was not a revenge. I confess that the words as uttered by me had more cruel meaning than mere revenge. I tried to block his way of love by this single sentence.

K was born in a Shinshu temple. But his ideas, even during his days in the middle school, were inclined to be very different from that of his family. I knew quite well that I, who do not know the



subtle differences of one Buddhist sect from another, have no right to say such a thing as this, but I understood this only concerning the question of man and woman. K had liked the word *shojin* from long before. I had understood this word as including suppression of passions. But I was surprised to find after asking him that it contained something stricter than that. That all must be sacrificed for the *michi* being his first article of faith, even purely spiritual love itself was banned, not to mention physical passions. I often heard this idea when he was trying to live by himself. I, who had been in love with the daughter even in those days, could not but oppose him. Whenever I did so, he looked sorry for me. There was much more contempt than sympathy expressed in his look.

As we had come through such a past as this, the sentence I uttered was sure to hurt him. Yet, as I said before, by this single sentence I did not intend to trample down all the past which he had constructed, but rather tried to make him build his future on it as before. I did not care if it would reach the *michi* or the heaven. I was only afraid of his suddenly changing his direction and interfering with my advantage. In a word, my cry was only the expression of my egoism.

"Those who have no sense of spiritual progress are foolish." I repeated it again, and watched how it would affect K.

"Yes, foolish," he replied, "I am a fool."

He stood still, and did not move. He looked down and watched the earth. In spite of myself, I was frightened. At that moment, I felt as if he were a burglar who turned into a hold-up man. But I noticed that his voice was too weak for a hold-up man. I wanted to consult the expression of his eyes, but he never looked at me. Then he began to walk slowly.

42

As I walked side by side with him, I secretly waited for the next word which would come from him. Perhaps ambush is a more suitable word to describe my attitude. At that time it seemed to me all right even if I assaulted him unawares. But I had the conscience of a cultured man, so if somebody had approached me whispering "You are a coward" just once, I might have come back to my usual self in a moment. If it had been K who said this, I should have blushed before him. Only, K was too honest, too unsophisticated, to reprove me, and his personality, too good. I, blinded, forgot to respect it, but took advantage of it. I tried to knock him down using it as my weapon.

After a while, K called my name, and looked at me. This time it was I who naturally stopped. Then K too stopped. It was at that moment that I could finally look right in front of me into K's eyes. K was taller than I, so I had to look up; and in this

posture, and with a heart like a wolf I faced him, who was exactly like an innocent lamb.

"Let us stop this," he said. There was strange sadness in his eyes as well as in his words, and I could not say anything for a while. Then he repeated it in a tone of entreaty, "Please don't talk about this any more." Then I gave him a cruel answer, like a wolf going to fasten his teeth on the throat of a defenceless lamb.

"You ask me to stop, but I did not begin it. It's you who asked me to tell you my opinion. But if you wish to stop, I don't mind doing so, only, it is of no use stopping talking, if you have no resolution to stop the thing itself. Where on earth is your philosophy, what are you going to do with it?"

When I finished, the tall K seemed to have become smaller. He was a very obstinate man, as I have said again and again; but on the other hand, so honest that he could not but care if his contradictions were pointed out and severely reproofed. When I perceived the full consequence of my speech, I was finally reassured. Then suddenly he asked, "Resolution?" and before I replied, added, "Resolution—yes, I have still some resolution." His tone was like a soliloquy, or the words uttered in a dream.

We left the matter there, and walked toward our house in Koishikawa. It was a warm day, comparatively windless, but in winter the park was deserted. Especially when I looked back at the

cedar-trees, with their leaves turned brown by the frost, towering into the dark sky, I felt as if the cold had crept into my back. We quickly passed through Hongo Hill in twilight, and walked down into the valley of Koishikawa to go up the hill beyond. It was then that I finally began to feel the warmth of my body under my coat.

As we were in a hurry, we hardly spoke on our way back. When we sat at the dinner table, the *okusan* asked me why we were so late. I replied that we had been to Ueno as K wanted a walk. She looked surprised, and said, "Why, it is so cold." The daughter wanted to know if there was anything on in Ueno. I replied that nothing was on in Ueno, but that we just went for a walk. K, who used to be silent, was still more silent this evening. Even if the *okusan* talked to him, or the daughter laughed, he seldom opened his mouth. Then, finishing his rice as if he were swallowing it with an effort, he went back to his room before I did.

43

In those days, the words "awakening" or "new life" had not yet come into fashion, but the reason why K did not throw his old self off and run in the new direction at full speed was not because of his wanting the modern outlook of life, but because of his possessing the past, which was so precious to him that he could not throw it away. It is almost

right to say that he had always lived for this past. So it was not because his love was feeble that he did not rush directly toward the object of his love. Even if his love was burning within him, he could not move blindly. Unless he was forced by the strongest impulse to forget everything, K had to stand still for a while to cast a glance on his past. Then he was obliged to go on the way directed by his past as before. Moreover, he had dogged perseverance rare in modern people. I thought I read his mind through in these points.

The night I came back from Ueno was a comparatively peaceful one for me. I pursued K after he had gone back to his room, and sat by his desk, and deliberately began to talk foolish gossip. He looked annoyed. Perhaps some look of triumph shone in my eyes. I was sure my voice sounded triumphant. After warming myself beside the same brazier with K, I came back to my room. At that moment, I, who was inferior to him in everything else, had the realization that he was not worth any fear.

Soon I fell into a peaceful sleep, but was suddenly awakened by a voice calling my name. I looked up, and saw that the sliding-doors were open about two feet, and K's dark figure stood there. In his room, there was still a lamp shining as mine had been in the early hours of the night. I, suddenly brought to this from dreamland, could not speak for a while, and blankly looked at this scene.

K asked me if I had been asleep. He was al-

ways late at night. I asked him, standing like a black shadow in the doorway, if he wanted me to do anything for him. He replied that there was nothing, but he wondered if I was still awake and just asked. As the light was shining on his back, I could not see the expression of his eyes and face at all, but his voice was even calmer than usual.

Then K shut the sliding-doors, and my room returned to its former darkness. I shut my eyes again in order to dream quietly in this darkness. Soon I became unconscious. But next morning, this event during the night struck me as strange. I wondered if it was all a dream, so I asked K at breakfast. He said certainly he opened the sliding-doors and called my name. I asked him why he did so, but he did not reply clearly, and after my mind had almost left the matter, asked me if I could sleep well recently. I felt strange, though I did not know why.

That day, we had our lectures at the same hour, so we went out together. On our way to the university, I, who had been troubled about last night, asked him again. But he did not give me any satisfactory answer. I asked again if he had intended to tell me something about his love. He denied this in a strong, definite tone, as if he were reminding me that he had already said "Let us stop this" in Ueno the day before. K had an acute pride in matters like this. As I realized this, the word "resolution" suddenly came back to my mind. Then this word,

which I had hardly thought about, began to oppress my mind in strange force.

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K's resolute character was thoroughly known to me. I knew very well too why he was irresolute about this matter only. In other words, I was triumphant, as I had added to my understanding of his usual self the knowledge of his peculiar reaction to love. But while I was chewing his word "resolution" in my mind, my sense of triumph began to fade, and finally began to flicker. I began to wonder if this might not be exceptional. I began to doubt if in his secret heart he had the final means to solve all his doubts and anguish all at once. Coming back to the word in this new light, I was surprised. Perhaps it might have been better if, at this surprise, I had searched for the real meaning of the word with an open mind. But alas! I was half blinded. I interpreted the word as his resolution only to approach the daughter. I believed with all my heart and mind that this meant the realization of his resolute character in the sphere of love.

I heard in my ears a voice whisper that I also needed the last resolution. In answer to this voice, I pulled myself together. I made up my mind that I should have to carry on the business before K, and moreover with him ignorant of it.

Silently I was waiting for the opportunity to

come. But though two or three days passed, I could not seize it. I had thought I should negotiate with the *okusan* when both K and the daughter were out. But every day I found that when one was out the other was in, and could not find a single chance. I was irritated.

After a week, I could not wait any more, and pretended to be ill. The *okusan*, as well as the daughter and K, tried to get me up, but with a vague answer, I did not leave my bed till about ten. I waited for the house to become hushed, K and the daughter having gone, and finally got up. The *okusan*, seeing me, asked me what was the matter. She also advised me to stay in bed, as she would send me my breakfast. But I was too well and strong to remain in bed, and when I finished washing, I had my breakfast in the sitting-room as usual. The *okusan* served me, sitting on the other side of the long brazier. With my bowl in my hand, eating a meal which was too late for breakfast and too early for lunch, I was troubled in my mind by the problem of how to begin my negotiations, so I think I really looked a sufferer.

Having finished my breakfast, I began to smoke. As I did not stand up, the *okusan* could not leave her seat beside the brazier. She called the maid, and ordering her to clear the table, talked with me, as she was pouring water into the kettle and wiping the brazier. I asked her if she was particularly busy. She replied that she was not, but asked why. I

said that I had something to discuss with her. She asked what it was, looking at my face. Her tone was so light that it seemed impossible for her to enter my mood, and I hesitated.

Not knowing what to do, I roamed about in idle words, and asked her if K had said anything recently. She looked as if she had never dreamed of such a thing, and asked me what it was K wanted to say. Then before I replied, she said, "Did he say something to you?"

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I, who had not had the slightest intention of telling K's confession to the *okusan*, said, "O no." The next moment, this lie made me feel uneasy. But all I could do was to say that it was not about K that I wanted to speak to her, as the thought came to me that he had never asked me to do anything for him. The *okusan*, saying "Yes", was waiting for my next words, and I had to begin. I said quite suddenly, "*Okusan*, please give me your daughter." She did not look so much surprised as I had expected, yet apparently was not prepared for any answer for a while, and looked at my face in silence. As I had already begun, I could not afford to be embarrassed by her scrutiny of my face, and repeated, "O please at all costs," and added, "Give her to me as my wife." The *okusan*, who was older, was far calmer than I was, and said, "Yes, but is it not

too sudden?" When in an instant I replied, "Yes, I want her at once," she began to laugh, and asked me again, "Have you thought about it carefully?" And I explained to her in strong words that even though I referred to this matter suddenly I had been constantly thinking about it.

After that, we exchanged two or three questions and answers, but I forgot what they were about. The *okusan* was clear-minded and decisive like a man, and I found it much easier to deal with her in a matter like this than with an ordinary woman. "All right, you shall have her," she said. Then afterwards she said, "It seems as if you were begging me to give her, but really it is I who am to beg you to have her. As you know, she is a poor, fatherless child."

Our talk came to an end, simple and clear. I think it did not take more than a quarter of an hour from the beginning to the end. The *okusan* did not ask me anything. She said there was no need to consult their relatives, but it was all right if she told them afterwards. She clearly stated that it was not even necessary to ask the daughter. It seemed as if I, whose education was higher than hers, was more conventional and formal than she was in these matters. When I remarked that she ought to ask the daughter, if not the relatives, she said, "It is all right. How should I marry my daughter to a man whom she does not like?"

As I came back to my room, I felt queer, be-

cause things had gone on so easily. Doubts even crept into my mind from I knew not where, and I wondered if it was really all right. But the idea that my future destiny was more or less decided by this renewed everything in me.

About at lunch-time, I went to the sitting-room and asked the *okusan* when she would tell her daughter about my proposal. She said it would not matter to me when she told her, as she, who knew her daughter best, consented to this matter. I felt she was much more like a man than I was, and was going to leave her, when she stopped me and said, if I wanted her to tell the daughter as soon as possible, she would tell her this afternoon, immediately after she came back from school. I asked her to do so, and came back to my room. But when I pictured myself silently sitting at my desk and listening to the private talks of the mother and her daughter in the sitting-room, I felt it impossible to remain calm. Finally I put on my hat, and went out. At the bottom of the hill, however, I passed the daughter, who looked surprised to see me. When I took off my hat, and said, "Hullo," she asked me if I was well again, looking puzzled. I replied, "O yes, I am very well now," and quickly turned down the road toward Suidobashi.

I went into the street of Jinbocho from Saru-

gakucho and turned down the road toward Ogawamachi. It was always to poke into the second-hand bookshops that I roamed about the district, but on that day I could not bring myself to look at the worn-out books. Walking, I was incessantly thinking about the house I had just left. I thought about the *okusan*—what had passed between her and me before I came out; I imagined what she and her daughter might be doing after the latter had come back. In a word, I was, as it were, made to walk about by these imaginings. Moreover, sometimes I suddenly stood still, quite unconsciously, in the middle of the street, and wondered if at that moment the *okusan* was telling her daughter about me, and at other times, I wondered if it was all over.

I finally crossed Mansei Bridge, and went up the Myojin slope and came to Hongo Hill, then went down Kikusaka to the valley of Koishikawa. I walked about in the three wards, drawing a flat circle. Strangely the thought of K never entered my mind during this long walk. Now when I look back on those days, and ask myself why I forgot entirely about K, I cannot think of any reason. I only wonder. Was it because my mind was so concentrated on another matter that I could forget K? But my conscience could never have allowed me to do so.

My guilty feeling toward K revived when I opened the entrance-door and was going to enter my room, that is, at the moment when I was going

to pass through his room. He was reading at his desk as usual. As usual he lifted his eyes from the book and looked at me. But he did not greet me with his usual words. He asked me, "Are you better now? Have you been to the doctor?" At that moment, I was almost tempted to kneel before him and ask his pardon. This impulse was not at all a weak one. If only K and I had been standing in the middle of a heath, I am sure I should have obeyed the order of my conscience and asked his pardon on the spot. But there were other people in the house. My natural impulse was checked, and alas, did not ever again revive.

At dinner, I saw K again. K, who was completely ignorant of what had happened on that day, was only melancholy, and not the slightest sign of suspicion could be perceived in his eyes. The *okusan*, who also did not know the secret between K and me, looked happier than usual. It was only I who knew everything. I swallowed the rice which tasted like lead. The daughter did not appear at the table as usual. When the *okusan* called her, she only replied "Yes" from the next room, but did not come. As he heard this, K looked mystified, and finally asked the *okusan* what was the matter. She replied that perhaps her daughter was shy, stealing a look at me. K, wondering more, began to ask why she was shy. The *okusan*, smiling, looked at my face again.

From the moment when I sat at the table, I

almost guessed what had happened by the *okusan's* look. But I felt it would be extremely awkward if she explained everything to him at this moment. I was in great consternation, because the *okusan* was a woman who could have done such a thing. But fortunately K returned to his former silence. The *okusan*, who was in higher spirits than usual, did not proceed further. I heaved a sigh, and returned to my room. But I could not help thinking about what attitude I should take toward K in the future. I tried to invent various apologies in my mind. But there was not any worthy of being offered to K. Coward that I was, I became tired of explaining myself to him.

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I spent two or three days in that state. During those days, the never-ceasing uneasiness because of K oppressed my mind. Even if no perceptible change had taken place in the household, I might have felt I had to do something for him. Moreover the *okusan's* tone and her daughter's attitude pricked my conscience, as they reminded me of my engagement and K. The *okusan*, who was in some ways straightforward as a man, might betray me at any moment and tell everything to K at meal-time. The daughter's attitude toward me, which became decidedly more intimate than before, might provoke K's doubts. I was put in the position that I must

tell him of the new relationship established between this family and me. But it seemed a very difficult task to me, who knew my own moral weakness too well.

Not knowing what to do, I thought I should ask the *okusan* to tell him, of course in my absence. But if she told him the real story, it would make no difference except that it was indirectly told. On the other hand, if I asked her to tell a made-up story, she would certainly cross-examine me. If I were to tell her everything and ask her favour, I had to expose my weakness to my sweetheart and her mother from my own choice. As I was an honest youth, I could not help thinking that this would affect my future reputation. It seemed to be an unendurable misfortune to lose my sweetheart's trust before my marriage, however slightly it might be.

In short, I was a fool who missed his footing in trying to walk the way of honesty. Or I was a cunning man. My soul and Heaven were all that knew of this at that moment. But in order to get up again and step forward I had to announce my fall to the people around me whatever happened. I wanted to conceal my fall to the end, but at the same time, I was impelled to advance. My feet were rooted to the ground because of this dilemma and could not go any further.

Five or six days later, the *okusan* suddenly asked me if I had told K about my engagement. I replied

that I had not yet done so. Then she reproved me, asking why I had not. I hardened at this question. Even now I can clearly remember the words by which the *okusan* startled me at that time.

"No wonder that he looked funny when I told him. It is very naughty of you to conceal it from such an intimate friend as he."

I asked the *okusan* if K said anything at that time. She replied that he said nothing in particular. But I could not help asking for further details. The *okusan*, who had no reason to conceal them from me, described to me K's behaviour most minutely, after a preliminary remark that there was nothing worth telling.

Considering all the *okusan* had said, K seemed to have received this final blow with calm surprise. At first he only said "Is that so?" about the new relationship formed between the daughter and me. But when the *okusan* said, "Do congratulate them on it," he looked at her face for the first time, and smiling, said, "I am so glad," and stood up. Then before he opened the sliding-door of the sitting-room, he asked, turning his face towards the *okusan*, "When will they get married?" and said, "I should very much like to give them some present, but I am afraid I cannot, because I have no money." I, who sat in front of the *okusan* and listened to her talk, felt an acute pain in my breast as if it were completely choked.

Calculating, I found that it was more than two days since the *okusan* had told him. During those days, there was no difference in K's manner toward me, so that I had not suspected it at all. I thought that his detached air was worth admiring, even if he only managed to wear it to disguise his internal pain. When I made K and myself stand side by side in my mind and compared the two, he looked far greater than I. The thought, "I have failed as a man, even if I have triumphed in my scheme," arose like a whirlwind in my breast. I secretly blushed, thinking how much K might be despising me. But it was more painful to my self-respect to go to him now and be humiliated.

It was Saturday night when in my indecision I finally made up my mind to wait till the next day. But on that very night, K died, committing suicide. It makes me shiver even now to remember the scene. Perhaps it was not a mere accident that that night I lay with my head towards the West, though I usually lay towards the East. I happened to be awakened by the chilly draught coming over my head, then when I looked, I found that the sliding-doors between K's room and mine were open as much as the other night. But there was no black shadow of K standing there. Moved by a sudden impulse, I propped my body on my elbows and getting up, cast a sharp glance into K's room. I saw the dim

lamp light, and the bed. But the quilt was piled up at the foot of the bed, as if the sleeper had found it too hot and had torn it off, and K himself lay on his stomach, with his head toward the further side of the room,

I called "Ho", but there was no answer. "What is the matter?" I called again. But K's body did not move at all. I immediately stood up and walked toward the threshold, and looked round his room by the dim lamp light.

The first impression that I received at that moment was almost like the one when K had suddenly confessed his love. As soon as my eyes glanced at the inside of the room, they lost their capacity to move, as if they had been turned into artificial ones made of glass. I stood, as if my feet had been rooted to the floor. Then when this state had passed like a squall, I again felt that I had made a terrible confusion. The dimness—the full consciousness of the irretrievable disaster—pierced my being, and in a moment cast its dismal light on my whole future. I began to tremble.

Yet I could not forget myself to the last. I soon noticed a letter on the desk. It was directed to me as I had expected. I frantically opened it. However, nothing I had expected could be found there. I had expected many sentences which would severely hurt me, and I had feared how the *okusan* and her daughter would despise me if they read the letter. When I glanced at it, I felt a great relief.

(It was only from the worldly point of view that I was relieved, but it seemed exceedingly important to me.)

The content of the letter was simple, and was rather abstract. It said that he was so weak in mind and devoid of enterprising spirit that he could see no hope in his future, and therefore he would commit suicide. Then in simple phrases, his thanks for my kindness to him were added, and also another sentence asking me to take care of his affairs after his death. Then he asked me to ask the *okusan's* pardon for troubling her so much by seeking death in this way, and to let his relatives in the country know this. All necessary things were referred to in simple wording, but there was not a hint to the daughter. When I finished the letter, I realized that K had deliberately avoided the name of the daughter. What struck and pained me most was the postscript which seemed to have been added with the remnant of his Chinese ink, and which said that he should have died long before and that he could not understand why he lived on till then.

With trembling hands, I folded the letter and put it into the envelope. I deliberately put it on the desk, hoping that it would attract everybody's attention, and turning back, I saw for the first time on the sliding-door the blood that had burst forth from K's body.

With a sudden movement I held K's head with both my hands and lifted it a little. I wanted to have a look at his face. But as I peeped into his face which was turned toward the floor by thus lifting it, I withdrew my hands immediately. It was not only because I shuddered, but also because his head seemed to me so heavy. For a while I looked at his cold ears which I had just touched and his thick black hair which was cut short and which was not at all different from his life-time. I could not weep at all. I was only filled with fear. I not only felt the simple sensual fear caused by the scene in front of me, but was also deeply impressed by the dreadful destiny which was revealed by this friend who had suddenly changed into a cold mass.

Not knowing what to do, I went back to my room, and began to walk about the eight-mat room. My mind ordered me to do this, though it knew that there was no meaning in it. I felt I had to do something, and at the same time I thought I could not do anything. I could not help walking round and round the room, like a bear put in a pen.

Sometimes I wanted to wake up the *okusan*. But the thought that it would never do to show this scene to a woman prevented me. The strong resolution that even if I could wake her up I could never frighten the daughter oppressed me. So I resumed my pacing round and round the room.

While I was walking in this way, I lighted my lamp, and often looked at my watch. The time never passed so slowly. I don't know exactly what time I first woke up, but evidently it was near the dawn. I, longing for the dawn as I walked round and round, was tortured by the dread that this darkness would go on for ever.

We used to get up before seven. This was because our lectures often began at eight. The maid, therefore, was to get up at about six. However, it was before six that I went to wake her up. Then the *okusan*, hearing me, told me that it was Sunday. She seemed to be awakened by my footsteps in the corridor. So I asked her to come to my room. She followed me, putting on her everyday *haori* over her night-dress. As soon as we entered my room, I shut the sliding-doors which had been open, and said to the *okusan* that something extraordinary had happened. She asked what it was. I pointed to the next room with my chin, and said, "Please don't be frightened." She lost colour. I said again, "Okusan, K has committed suicide." As if she were cowed, the *okusan* stood in silence, looking at my face. Then suddenly I sat down and bowed low to her, and said, "I am so sorry. It was all my fault. I am so sorry to be troubling you and your daughter." I had never thought of such a thing till the moment when I stood in front of her. But when I looked at her face, such words rushed from me unconsciously. Please interpret this in this way, that I

had to beg the *okusan*'s pardon, as I could not beg K's forgiveness any more. That is to say, my natural self was too strong to be controlled by my worldly self, and made me impulsively speak out the words of penitence. It was fortunate for me that the *okusan* did not take them in such a deep sense. With a pale face, but consolingly, she said, "It is a sudden unexpected accident, and no one is to be blamed." But surprise and fear gripped the muscles of her face, as if they were carved there.

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I was sorry to show such a sight to the *okusan*, but I went and opened the sliding-doors which I had just shut. At that moment K's room was almost dark, as the oil was burnt up in the lamp. I stepped back, and with my lamp in my hands, turned to the *okusan* as I stood at the threshold. Standing behind me as if she were trying to hide herself, she peeped into the four-mat room. She would not enter the room, but asked me to open the shutters.

Her actions after that were completely to the point as was worthy of an officer's wife. I went to the doctor, and also to the police-station. I did this all because I was ordered by the *okusan*. Till such necessary proceedings were finished, she did not admit anybody to K's room.

K had died almost instantly by cutting his carotid artery with a small knife. There was no

other wound to be seen. It was clear that the blood on the sliding-doors which I had seen by the dreamy dim light had gushed all at once from his neck. I looked at it again clearly by the daylight, and was surprised at the vehement power of a man's blood.

The *okusan* and I cleaned K's room, using all our brain and skill. Fortunately his blood was mostly absorbed in the quilts, and the mats on the floor were not stained very much, so it was comparatively easy to clean. We brought his body into my room, and made him lie down as if he were asleep. Then I went out to send a telegram to his home.

When I returned, incense was already being burned close to his head. As soon as I entered the room, the sacred scent greeted me, and I perceived two women sitting amidst the smoke. I saw the daughter for the first time since the event. She was weeping. The *okusan's* eyes, too, were red. I, who had forgotten to weep till then, could at last indulge in sorrow. How much was my heart relieved by this sorrow! It watered my heart which was dried up by pain and fear.

I sat in silence beside these women. The *okusan* asked to offer incense to K. I did so, and again sat without a word. The daughter did not say anything to me. Rarely she spoke to her mother a word or two, but it was all about something to be done immediately. There was yet no room in her mind to talk reminiscently about K. Still, I thought

it very fortunate to have been able to spare her from the dreadful sight of the early dawn. I was afraid such a sight would destroy the beauty of a young sensitive girl. I could not forget this even when my horror was so strong that it seemed to be pervading the tips of my hair. I felt the same sort of uneasiness as I might feel if I struck a pretty innocent flower at random.

When K's father and brother came from the country, I told them my ideas about K's grave. K and I often walked in the neighbourhood of Zoshigaya, and he was very fond of the cemetery there. So I promised him, of course jokingly, that I would bury him there if he died. I wondered if it would mean anything to him now to fulfil my promise and put him in Zoshigaya. But I wanted to kneel down in front of his grave and renew my penitence every month as long as I lived. Perhaps K's father and brother felt a little obligation to me who had been helping their outcast son and brother, for they consented to my proposal.

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On my way back from K's funeral, one of his friends asked me why K had committed suicide. Since his death, I had been tortured by this question. The *okusen* and her daughter, K's father and brother from the country, his acquaintances to whom I wrote and told of his death, and even the

journalists who had nothing to do with him—all asked me the same question. Whenever I was confronted by this question, my conscience ached, as if it were pricked by a needle, and I heard a voice through the question saying, "Confess quickly that you have killed him."

I gave the same answer to everybody. I only repeated the contents of K's last letter to me, never adding a word to it. K's friend, who asked me the same question and received the same answer from me on our way back from the funeral, produced a newspaper from his breast-pocket and showed it to me. As I walked, I read the article that he pointed out to me. It stated that K's suicide was prompted by his pessimistic outlook on life due to his family trouble. Without saying anything I folded the newspaper and returned it to him. He also told me that in another newspaper they said that K had gone mad and killed himself. I had been so busy that I had had no time to read the papers, and had no idea how they treated K's death, but it had been troubling me all the same. I was very much afraid that an article might bring trouble to the *okusan* and her daughter. I especially dreaded lest the daughter's name should be referred to, however lightly. I asked him if he had come across other papers saying different things about this matter. He said these two were all he had noticed.

It was soon after this that we moved to our present house. The *okusan* and her daughter could

not stand the old house. To me, too, it was a torture to be constantly reminded of the event of that night, and so we decided to move.

Two months later I safely graduated from the university, and scarcely had a half year passed since my graduation, when I was married to the daughter. Externally, everything came out as I had expected, so I should have congratulated myself on my felicity. The *okusan* and her daughter looked extremely happy. I, too, was happy. But to my happiness a dark shadow was attached, and I wondered if this happiness would finally lead me to a tragic doom.

When we were married, the daughter—no, she was already my wife, so I shall refer to her as such from now on—my wife suddenly proposed that we should visit K's grave together. Without any definite reason, I was startled, and asked her why she thought of such a thing. Then she said K would be very happy if we two went and visited his grave. I gazed intently at her innocent face, without realizing it until she asked me why I looked so strange.

To gratify her wish, I went to Zoshigaya with my wife. I washed the new grave-stone with water, and my wife put some flowers and incense in front of it. We bowed and worshipped. I am sure my wife wanted to tell K all that had happened to us, so that K could share our happiness. But all I repeated in my mind over and over again were the words that I was to blame. She rubbed K's grave-stone and said she liked it very much. It was not a

very good one, but because I had gone to a stone-mason myself and ordered it, she must have wished to praise it. I thought of K's bones, newly buried under this grave-stone; then I thought of my new wife, and I could not help feeling the mockery of Destiny. Then I made up my mind not to visit K's grave with my wife.

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Such a feeling toward my dead friend lasted for a long time. This was indeed what I had feared from the beginning. Even my marriage, my long cherished hope, I went through with an uneasy mind. But because no human being can see through the future, I thought it would perhaps change my mood completely and lead me to a new life. However, when I began to live with my wife, my fragile hope was destroyed by the stern reality. As I looked at my wife, I was suddenly threatened by K. That is to say, my wife stood between K and me, and bound me to him, never releasing me from his apparition. Though everything in my wife pleased me, I wanted to shun her because of this one thing. On the other hand, this feeling of mine immediately impressed itself on her sensitive heart, and yet she could not understand the reason for it. She often cross-examined me as to what I was musing on so intently and asked me what was wrong with her. Sometimes I could laugh it off, but sometimes she

became hysterical, complaining, "You must be disliking me," or "I am sure you are keeping something from me," and I was tortured.

I often thought of confessing the truth to my wife. But whenever I was on the verge of telling her, some power outside myself suddenly came upon me and restrained me. Perhaps it is not necessary to tell you why, because you understand me so well, but I feel I ought to explain this. In those days I had no intention whatever to pretend to my wife that I was a worthier man than I really was. Moreover, if I had confessed everything to my wife with a heart as honest and meek as when I faced K in my mind, she would have certainly forgiven my sin, even with tears of joy, and so I was not consulting my own interest when I hesitated. I did not confess because I could not bear to leave a black spot in her memory. Please understand that it was too painful to me to sprinkle even a drop of ink over anything so pure white.

I, who could not get rid myself of the thought of K, was always restless. I tried to bury myself in books to drive away my uneasiness, and began to work at a terrific pace. I waited for the day when I could publish the result of my studies to the world. However, this deliberate aim, too, was very painful, because it was all false and groundless, and I could no longer be absorbed in books. I folded my arms again and began to observe the world.

That my mind was relaxed because there was

no need for me to work for daily bread seemed to be my wife's interpretation of my state. It was quite natural for her to think so, because she and her mother had their own property which was enough for them to live on quietly without doing anything, and I myself was in no need of a situation. Perhaps I was more or less spoilt by this. But the chief reason why I became inactive did not lie there at all. In the days when I was deceived by my uncle, I felt it to the marrow of my bones that humanity was not to be relied upon, but I still trusted myself, all the more because I condemned others. Somewhere in my mind was a belief that I was a trustworthy fellow, no matter how wicked the world was. I suddenly tottered as this belief was completely destroyed by K's death and realized that I was exactly the same kind of man as my uncle. I, who had been disgusted with other people, was now disgusted with myself, and could not move any further.

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After finding it impossible to bury myself in books, I went through a period in which I tried to forget myself by drenching myself in *saké*. I don't say I like *saké*. But I could drink it if I tried, and so I tried to drink a lot and forget myself in a drunken stupor. However, before long, this superficial means made me more pessimistic. In the

midst of dead drunkenness, I suddenly realized what I was doing, that I was a fool who lied to myself by deliberately doing such a thing. Then with a shudder, my eyes and my mind were awakened. Sometimes I could not even get to this state of drunken oblivion, but the more I drank, the more deeply I was depressed. Moreover, there was always a melancholy reaction to this unnatural light-heartedness, and always I had to show this to my most beloved wife and her mother. They, on their part, interpreted this in the way most natural to them.

My wife's mother seemed to make some unpleasant remarks about me, but my wife kept them to herself. On the other hand, she felt she had to reproach me herself. I say reproach, but she never used vehement words, and I was seldom irritated by what she said. She entreated me to tell her what was wrong with her. Then she advised me to stop drinking *saké* for my future health. Sometimes she said, weeping, "You are a different man." Moreover, she even said, "You mightn't have changed so much if K had been alive." I once replied to her that perhaps that was true, but I was sad because what I meant was completely different from what she understood. Yet I could not bring myself to explain anything.

Sometimes I begged my wife's pardon, on the morning after I had come home late, drunk with *saké*. Sometimes she laughed; sometimes she was silent. Rarely tears fell down from her eyes. In

any case, I was greatly disgusted with myself. I was begging my own forgiveness when I begged my wife's. In the end, I stopped drinking *saké*. It was because I could not stand it any longer, rather than because of my wife's advice.

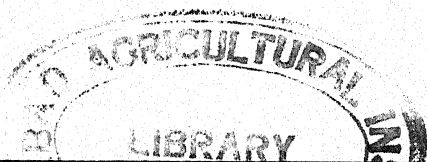
I stopped *saké*. But I did not want to do anything. The only thing I could do was read. Yet I always left the books without attempting to make any notes or write anything about them. My wife often asked me why I worked. I only laughed bitterly. But in the depth of my heart, I was sad, because the only person whom I loved and trusted did not understand me. I was sadder when I thought I could have made her understand me if I had been brave enough. I was lonely. I often felt that I was entirely by myself, away from everything in the world.

At the same time I thought of the cause of K's death over and over again. At the time when he died, my observation had been simple and direct, because my mind was obsessed by the idea of love. I had immediately decided that K died because of his disappointed love. But as my mind became calmer, I began to think that it was not so simple. The conflict between the ideal and the reality came into my mind, but this, too, was not enough. Finally I began to wonder if he was so lonely (like me) that he committed suicide, and I shuddered, as the foreboding that I was walking along the same road as K crossed my heart like an icy wind.

Then my wife's mother became ill. The doctor said that there was no hope of her recovery. I did all I could to nurse her. This was for the sick woman's sake as well as for my beloved wife's, but even more for humanity's sake. Even before this I longed to do something, but was compelled to be an idle spectator, because there was nothing for me to do. Inactive and cut off from the world, I felt for the first time that I had done something good. I think I was moved by what might be called a spirit of penance.

My mother-in-law died, and my wife and I were left alone. My wife told me that she had nobody whom she could count on in this world except me. I, who could not rely even on myself, was almost moved to tears, and thought that my wife was an unhappy woman, and even said so. She asked me why—she could not see what I meant; and I could not explain it to her. She wept, and said resentfully that it was because I had always been a perverse observer of her that such a remark escaped from me.

After my mother-in-law's death, I treated my wife as kindly as possible, not only because I loved her, but also because of a feeling which had a wider background than the love for a single individual. It seemed that my heart had been touched in the same way as when I had nursed my mother-in-law.



My wife looked happy. Yet somewhere in her contentment seemed to lurk a vague yearning caused by her inability to understand me. However, even if she could have understood me, this feeling of something lacking might rather have been increased than decreased. For it seems to me that more strongly than a man a woman prefers that kindness, which is offered to her to the exclusion of everybody else and even at the expense of the sense of duty, to that bigger humanitarian love.

Once she asked me why a man and a woman could not achieve a sympathetic communion with each other. I gave a vague answer, saying that it might be possible when they were young. She seemed to look back to her past and then heaved a faint sigh.

From that time a horrible foreboding began to oppress my heart. At first the foreboding happened to come upon my heart from outside. I was surprised, and shivered. Then after a while, my heart itself began to respond to this horrible oppression, till it began to seem that it had been lurking in the depth of my heart from birth. I wondered if anything had gone wrong with my mind whenever I felt like this. Yet I could not bring myself to see a doctor or to consult anybody else.

Only I deeply felt man's sin. This drove me to K's grave every month, and made me nurse my wife's mother. Again this feeling ordered me to be kind to my wife. Urged by this same feeling, I

even wished to be whipped by mere strangers in the street. As I went through these stages, I began to feel that I ought to whip myself rather than wait to be whipped, that rather than whipping myself, I ought to kill myself. Not knowing what to do, I made up my mind to live on as a man already dead.

How many years passed after I had made that decision! My wife and I loved each other as much as ever. We were never unhappy: we were happy. But it seems that my wife always felt a shadow of the blackest hue in this one thing in me—the thing which to me, too, was so serious. I feel very sorry for her when I think of this.

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My mind, which had decided to live on as a man already dead, often jumped up at incitements from the outer world. But as soon as I began to think of breaking my way towards some field of work, a tremendous power appeared from somewhere, and, gripping my mind, made me unable to move an inch. Then it said to me in an oppressive tone that I was a man who had no right to do anything. At these words I at once lost all energy. After a while I would try to pull myself together, when instantly that power would wring me. Clenching my teeth, I would cry aloud and ask why it stood in my way. Then the mysterious power would laugh coldly and say that I myself knew the

reason too well, which would deprive me again of all my strength.

Please bear it in your mind that there has always been this agonizing struggle in me who outwardly continued to lead such a monotonous eventless life. How many times more acutely did I suffer from that chagrin than my poor wife! I began to feel that at the moment when I could no longer sit still in this prison—when I found it utterly impossible to break my way through, it was all I could do to commit suicide which after all required the least bit of effort. Perhaps you would say “Why?” with wide wondering eyes, but that mysterious horrible power, which always came to wring my heart, left only the way to death free for me, while it checked my activity in every other direction. It might have been a different matter if I could have stayed immovable. But so long as I was to advance even a little bit, there was no other way for me to take but the one to death.

Several times before I thought of taking the easiest direction that my destiny offered me. But always I gave up the thought for my wife's sake. Certainly I had not courage to take my wife with me. I, who could not confess everything to her to relieve my soul, could not even think about such violent conduct as sacrificing her life for me. As I have my destiny, my wife has her own. It seemed extremely cruel and unnatural to throw our lives together into the fire.

At the same time, I imagined the solitary figure of my wife left alone. Her words after the death of her mother—that she had nobody in the world except me—impressed me so much that they sank deeply into my memory. I always hesitated, and was glad of my hesitation whenever I looked at her face. Then I stood still, utterly unable to do anything, and felt my wife's unsatisfied glances.

Remember. I have been living in this way. My mood when I met you for the first time was not much different from the one when we walked in the suburbs. There was always black shadow following me. I have, as it were, been letting my life drag on for my wife's sake. My condition was the same when you went back home after your graduation. I did not intentionally lie when I said to you that we should see each other again in September. I really thought so. I was sure to see you again even after autumn, and even at the end of next winter.

Then in the height of summer the Emperor Meiji died. I felt as if the spirit of Meiji began with the Emperor and came to an end with his death. The thought that it would be anachronistic for us, who had been most strongly influenced by the Meiji spirit, to survive the Emperor struck my bosom with a strong force. I said this to my wife. She did not take my words seriously, but suddenly said in a joking manner that I had better follow the Emperor to the grave.

I had almost forgotten this phrase—to follow one's lord to the grave. It seems that this phrase which everyday life seldom necessitated had sunk deep down in my memory and had begun to rot there. When my wife's teasing reminded me of it, I replied that I should follow the spirit of Meiji to the grave if ever I were to commit self-immolation. This reply, too, was not meant seriously, but at that moment I felt as if I could give a new meaning to this old useless expression.

About a month passed. On the evening of the Emperor's funeral I sat in my study as usual and heard the signal gun. To me it sounded as a signal announcing the passing for good of the Meiji Era. Later I found that it had also marked General Nogi's death. With an extra edition of the newspaper in my hands I unconsciously repeated to my wife, "He followed the Emperor to the grave."

I read in the newspapers the notes that General Nogi had written before his death. As I read the part where he referred to an incident during the Seinan War—the incident in which the flag he held was taken away by the enemy—I involuntarily bent my fingers and counted the years in which he lived on with the resolution to die, for ever since then he had been wishing to die to atone for this blunder. The Seinan War took place in the tenth year of Meiji, and so there are thirty-five years between that

time and now. General Nogi had been waiting these thirty-five years for an opportunity to die. I wondered which was more painful to such a person, the thirty-five years that he lived or that one moment when he thrust his sword into his stomach.

Two or three days afterwards I finally made up my mind to commit suicide. Perhaps you will find it difficult to grasp clearly the cause which drives me to death, just as I cannot fully understand the reason why Nogi died. If so, this comes from the difference of opinion brought about by the different ages people live in, and cannot be helped. Perhaps it may be more accurate to say that this comes from the differences of character with which each individual was born. At any rate, I believe I have said everything I wished to say, doing my best to make you understand me—a puzzling person.

I am leaving my wife behind me. It is fortunate that she has enough to live on when I am gone. I don't like to give her a cruel terror, so am intending to die without showing her my blood—shall try to disappear from this world stealthily before she notices it. I should like her to think that I died suddenly. I shall feel satisfied even if she associates my death with insanity.

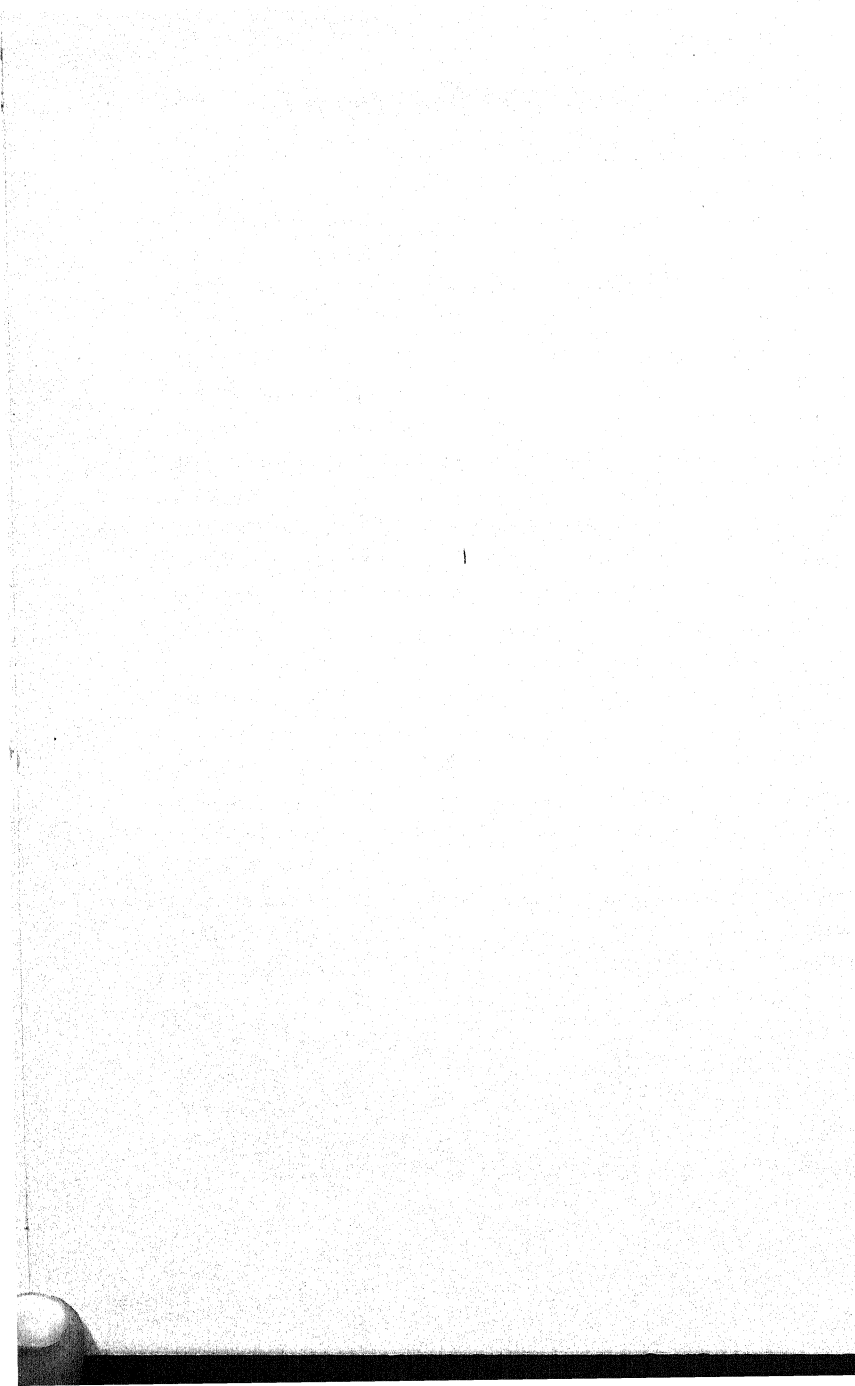
It is more than ten days since I made up my mind to commit suicide. Please understand that I have spent most of the time in writing this long autobiography for you. At first I meant to see you and tell you all this, but now that I have written it

down I am glad because I feel I have expressed myself more clearly by this method. I have not written this through mere whim. My past which has produced me cannot be clarified as a part of man's experience by anyone except me, so I feel that my effort to record it truthfully may not prove to be a waste of energy to you and to other people, in that it will be of some help to an understanding of humanity. I heard just recently that Watanabe Kazan postponed the day of his death for a week in order to finish his picture called Kantan. Perhaps this may be interpreted by outsiders as a superfluous act, but it may also be said that the person involved could not help it because he had his own need in his mind. My effort was not only prompted by my sense of obligation to you, but more than half of it came from my own need.

However, I have satisfied my need, and there is nothing else for me to do. By the time this letter reaches you, I shall no longer be in this world, I shall be dead. My wife went to her aunt's in Ichigaya about ten days ago and so is not at home. I advised her to go because her aunt had been ill and needed help. I have written most of this long letter while my wife was away. When she came home (as she did occasionally), I immediately hid it.

I am intending to make my past, good and bad, public property. But please understand that my wife is the only exception. I don't want to tell her anything at all. My only wish is to keep her memory

of the past as pure as possible, so as long as my wife is alive please keep everything I have told you in your mind as a secret confided to you only.



About Sôseki Natsumé and Kokoro

Sôseki Natsumé was born in Tokyo in 1867. After his graduation from the Imperial University of Tokyo, where he specialized in English literature, he taught at various schools, married, and in 1900 was sent by the government to England to study. On coming home at the beginning of 1903, he was given a lectureship at the First High School and also at the Imperial University of Tokyo, and held it till 1907, when he decided to devote his whole energy to novel writing and came to be connected with the *Asahi*, one of the outstanding newspapers.

Sôseki's creative genius first found its vent in *haiku* poetry, under the stimulation of Shiki Masaoka, an eminent *haiku* poet who was his school-mate. However, with the production of *Wagahai wa Neko de Aru* (I Am a Cat), his first novel, in 1905, he began definitely to concentrate his efforts on prose. At about the same time, he produced his highly romantic short stories; then in 1906 *Botchan* (A Greenhorn) and *Kusa-Makura* (The Grass-Pillow) were published. In 1907 *Gubijinsô* (The Poppy) and *Kôfu* (A Mine-Worker) appeared in serial form in the *Asahi*; in 1908, *Sanshirô*; in 1909, *Sorekara* (And Then); in 1910, *Mon* (The Gate); in 1912, *Higan Sugi Madé* (Till After the Spring Equinox); in 1913, *Kôjin* (Passers-By); in 1914, *Kokoro*; in 1915, *Michikusa* (Loitering). He was in the midst of writing *Meian* (Light and Shade), his last unfinished novel,

when ulcer of the stomach, from which he had continually been suffering for the last several years, returned again, and he died in December, 1916.

From the time of *Wagahai wa Neko de Aru* to that of *Meian* Sôseki developed so greatly that it would appear impossible to try to make a summary of his works as a whole in such a short note as this. Yet varied as his works are, the same nucleus seems to be heart and centre of all his works; and this is Sôseki as a man in relation to his surroundings. In his earlier works, especially in *Kusa-Makura*, Sôseki almost deliberately seeks the world of beauty, of poetry, and of dream as opposed to that of naked ugly reality. This is because to him in those days novel writing stood for an escape from the pressure of life. However, once when he realizes the impossibility of this attitude and makes up his mind to grapple with reality (as is revealed in his letter of October 26th, 1906), he starts to revolve the questions that have constantly haunted him, with his characteristic detachment and intellectual control but with ruthless concentration. It may be said, therefore, that his works from *Sanshirô* onwards are simply the deepening of one theme. In the trilogy of *Sanshirô*, *Sorekara*, and *Mon*, he deals with the romantic love which attracts the two strangers like a magnet as well as the enigma of life that does not bring the lovers together (*Sanshirô*), the triumph of this love over conventional morality and social law (*Sorekara*), and its consequences, that is to say, the overshadowed life of the couple (*Mon*). In *Higan Sugi Madé*, he creates the character of Sunaga with a passion that has not hitherto been felt in his works, and in Sunaga's trouble is deepened *Sanshirô*'s vaguely-felt mental conflict. Thus

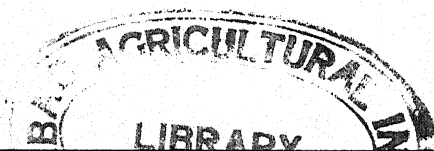
the character of Sôseki himself is more and more brought forward as he goes on writing, and it may be said he is revolving the question of how to live, in other words, the problem of human relationships, in these works. In *Kôjin* is presented another Sunaga in still deeper agonies, and the problem of human relationships is dealt with still more exclusively. The suffering of the hero of *Kôjin* chiefly originates from his overscrupulous sensibility to, and his inability to tolerate, what is ugly and false, and this is a direct reflection of Sôseki's own state of mind as is shown in his letter of October 5th, 1913.

In this respect *Kokoro* forms an exact antithesis to *Kôjin*. If in *Kôjin* Sôseki makes his hero persist in his self-asserting attitude, in *Kokoro* he deals with a man who, because of his painful past experiences, has come to deny himself through and through. Here lies the significance of *Kokoro* as it stands in Sôseki's whole works. When he has finished *Kokoro*, an evolution is brought about in Sôseki's mind, and that superb novel *Michikusa* is produced.

The word *kokoro* is an extremely difficult one to translate: the meanings of mind, heart, soul and spirit seem to be all contained in this single word, and yet it is not simply heart, or soul, or spirit. As the French translation* of this novel gives it, "the human heart" may perhaps be nearest to what Sôseki meant by this word. The translator, however, thought it best to leave the word as it is.

Sôseki, who confessed that the intricate tenacious character of Sunaga—the character which he likened to a

*Horiguchi Daigaku et Georges Bonneau: *Kokoro* (Le Pauvre Coeur Des Hommes), Paris, 1939.



Western oil-painting—was his, had always a longing for those simple strokes of Japanese paintings. With the heart of the artist in *Kusa-Makura*, he often turned to composing *haiku* and painting pictures in the style of the Southern Chinese school, or in that simple *haiga* style. The illustration given in this book is the one done in 1916, and is an example of the latter.

昭和十六年八月三十日 印刷
昭和十七年九月三日 發行
昭和十八年一月廿五日 再發行
昭和十八年六月十五日 三發行

KOKORO ◆英譯「心」◆

(出文協承認 い21056 號)

原作者 ナツ メ ソウ セキ
夏 目 漱 石
譯者 サ トウ
佐 藤 い ね 子
發行者 中 土 義 敬
東京市神田區錦町三丁目十二番地
印刷者 山 本 印 刷 所
東京市神田區錦町三丁目十三番地
(東京 3355) 山 本 竹 雄

發行所 北 星 堂 書 店

日本出版會々員番號 130037

東京市神田區錦町三丁目十二番地

THE HOKUSEIDO PRESS

KANDA, TOKYO, NIPPON

配給元 日本出版配給株式會社
東京市神田區淡路町二丁目九番地

定價 金貳圓八拾錢 ㊦

特別行爲稅相當額 金拾五錢

合計賣價 金貳圓九拾五錢